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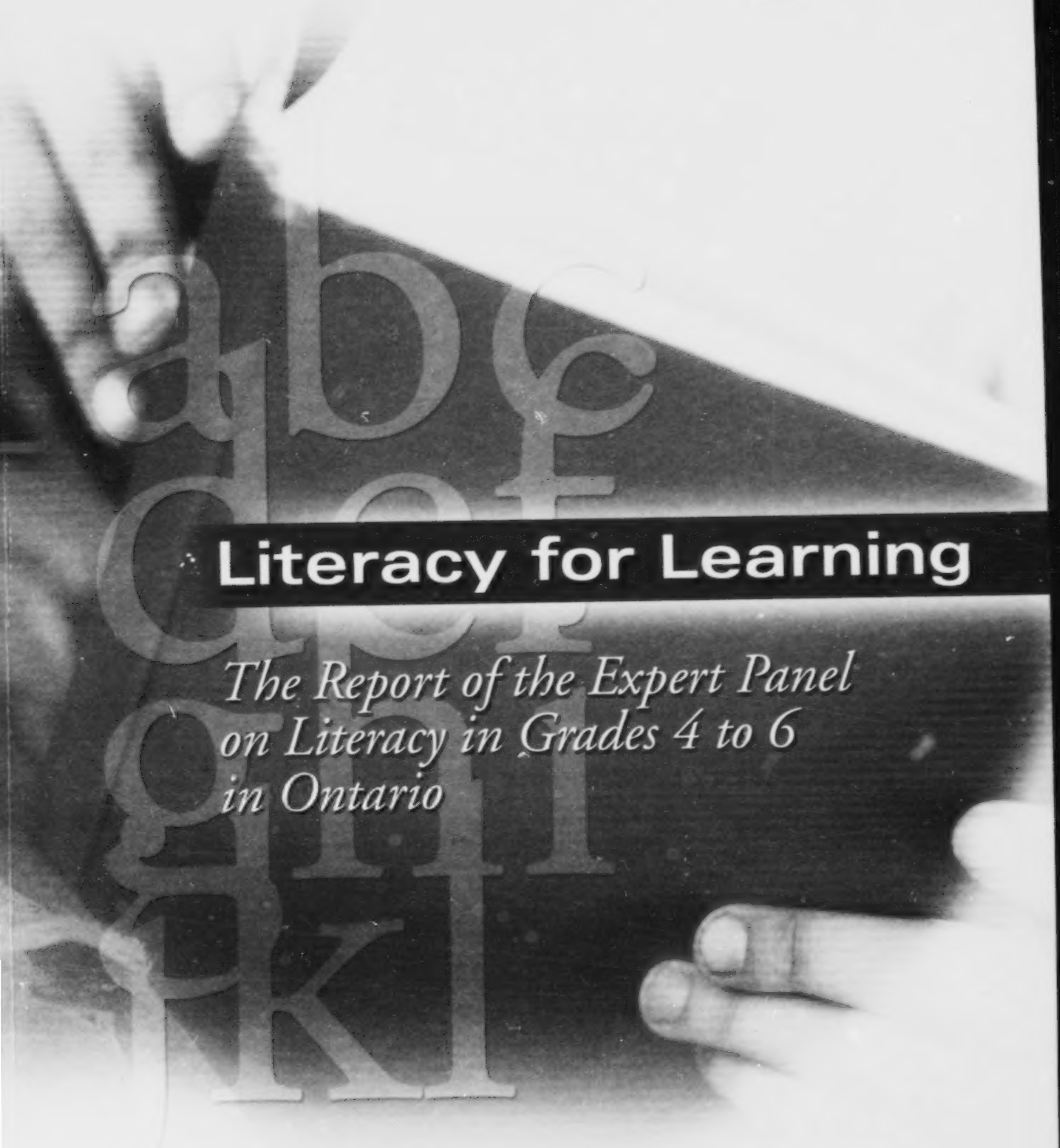

Literacy for Learning

The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario

2004

Ontario Education excellence for all

The preparation of this report by the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario was financially supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Expert Panel was made up of educators and researchers. This report reflects the consensus views of the panel members, and does not necessarily reflect the policies of the Ministry of Education.

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Literacy for Learning

The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario

October 2004

CONTENTS

1 ABOUT THIS REPORT 1

Context for the Report 2

Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario 2

2 LITERACY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 5

Literacy Defined 5

Texts of All Types 6

Language, Culture, and Identity Engagement 6

English-Language School System 7

French-Language School System 8

Four Roles of a Literate Learner 8

Developing Critical-Literacy Skills 9

3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR JUNIOR LITERACY 11

Guiding Principles 11

Planning Framework for Junior Literacy 14

4 THE JUNIOR LEARNER 15

Key Messages 15

Range of Junior Learners 16

Physical Changes 16

Intellectual Changes 16

Emotional and Social Changes 17

Personal and Cultural Identity 18

Gender 18

Family Context 19

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :
La littératie au service de l'apprentissage : Rapport de la table ronde des experts en littératie de la 4ᵉ à la 6ᵉ année
This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca.

5 The Learning Environment 21
Key Messages 21
Physical Environment 21
Classroom Resources 22
  Print Resources 23
  Visual Supports 23
  Other Hands-on Resources 23
Technology to Support Literacy 24
School Libraries 26

6 Approaches to Teaching and Learning 27
Key Messages 27
Creating a Community of Learners 28
Taking Time for Literacy 29
Integrating Literacy Into All Subjects 29
Connecting Reading, Writing, Talking, Listening, and Thinking 31
Developing Higher-Order Thinking Skills 32
  Thinking Aloud 34
  Using Metacognition 34
  Asking Open-Ended Questions 35
  Adopting a Model of Inquiry 36
  Developing Critical-Literacy Skills 37
Scaffolding and the Gradual Release of Responsibility 39
Flexible Groupings 40
Differentiated Instruction 40
  Characteristics of Differentiated Literacy Instruction 41
  Supporting Second-Language Learners 42
  Supporting Both Boys and Girls 42
  Supporting Students With Special Education Needs 43
What Principals and School Leaders Do 43

7 Assessment 45
Key Messages 45
Framework for Literacy Assessment in the Junior Grades 46
Planning With the End in Mind 47

Literacy Assessment Profiles 47
Stages in the Literacy Assessment Process 49
Assessment for Second-Language Learners 49
Assessment for Students With Special Education Needs 49
What Principals and School Leaders Do 52

8 TALKING AND LISTENING 55
Key Messages 55
What Students Need 56
Second-Language Learners in English and French Schools 56
What Teachers Do 57
Approaches to Learning Through Dialogue 58
Assessing Student Learning Through Talk 60
What Principals and School Leaders Do 60

9 READING 61
Key Messages 61
Getting to Know the Junior Reader 62
What Junior Readers Do 63
  Four Roles of the Developing Junior Reader 63
  Using Metacognition 64
  Using Cueing Systems 65
Comprehension 65
  Responding to Texts 66
  Developing Critical-Literacy Skills 67
Strategies to Support Comprehension 68
  Activating Prior Knowledge 68
  Predicting 69
  Visualizing 69
  Questioning 70
  Drawing Inferences 70
  Finding Important Ideas 70
  Summarizing 70
  Synthesizing 71
  Monitoring and Revising Comprehension 71
  Evaluating 71

Word Knowledge to Support Comprehension 72
Instructional Approaches 73
Assessing Student Reading 76
What Principals and School Leaders Do 77

10 WRITING 79
- Key Messages 79
- Getting to Know the Junior Writer 80
- What Junior Writers Do 80
  - Four Roles of the Developing Junior Writer 81
  - Using Metacognition 82
  - Using Different Text Forms 82
  - Developing the Writer's Craft 83
  - Developing a Writer's Ethic 83
- The Recursive Writing Process 83
- Conferring 86
- Instructional Approaches and Mini-Lessons 86
- The Role of Word Knowledge 88
- Assessing Student Writing 89
  - The Student's Literacy Portfolio 90
- What Principals and School Leaders Do 90

11 BUILDING SCHOOL SUCCESS 91
- Key Messages 91
- School Success Planning 92
- Framework for Discussing School-Wide Literacy 92
- Shared Vision and Culture 93
- Assessment and Other Information 95
- Classroom Practices 96
- Support for All Students 96
- Family and Community Engagement 96
- Targeted Resources 97
- Professional Learning 97
- Shared Leadership 99

12 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING 103
Key Messages 103
Building a Professional Learning Community 103
Using Research 104
Using Information Technology 105
Approaches to and Topics for Professional Learning 105
Selecting Professional Resources 106
What Principals and School Leaders Do 107

13 THE PATH FORWARD 109
Shared Vision and Culture 110
Assessment and Other Information 110
Classroom Practices 110
Support for All Students 111
Family and Community Engagement 111
Targeted Resources 111
Professional Learning 112
Shared Leadership 113

GLOSSARY 115

SOURCES AND RESOURCES 121

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1 Recent Expert Panel Reports on Literacy in Ontario Schools 1
Figure 2 Four Roles of a Literate Learner 9
Figure 3 Planning Framework for Effective Literacy Instruction in the Junior Grades 14
Figure 4 Ranges of Development Among Junior Learners 16
Figure 5 Using Reading, Writing, Talking, and Listening in Combination to Make Meaning 32
Figure 6 A Taxonomy to Promote Higher-Order Thinking 33
Figure 7 Scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development 39
Figure 8 Framework for Literacy Assessment in the Junior Grades 46
Figure 9 Some Suggested Components of a Literacy Assessment Profile 48
Figure 10 Stages in the Literacy Assessment Process 50

Figure 11 Five Principles of Effective Dialogue 59
Figure 12 Four Roles of the Developing Junior Reader 64
Figure 13 Strategies to Support Comprehension 68
Figure 14 Instructional Approaches for Reading 74
Figure 15 Four Roles of the Developing Junior Writer 81
Figure 16 Teaching the Recursive Writing Process in the Junior Classroom 84
Figure 17 Supporting Students at Each Stage of the Writing Process 85
Figure 18 Framework for Professional Conversations About Promoting School-Wide Literacy 93
Figure 19 Focus Questions for Conversations About Promoting School-Wide Literacy 100
Figure 20 Building a Professional Learning Community to Support Junior Literacy 104

> Literacy is about more than reading and writing – it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. Literacy … finds its place in our lives alongside other ways of communicating. Indeed, literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Those who use literacy take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of "*literacy as freedom*".
>
> (UNESCO, Statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003–2012; italics added)

1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report sets out a framework for ensuring that students in Grades 4 to 6 in all publicly funded schools in Ontario receive the strategic instruction and support they need to develop as fully literate readers, writers, talkers, and thinkers. The report calls on educators to continue building on the foundations for literacy that are laid in a child's early years, and to prepare each child for more advanced and applied literacy learning in later grades and in life. Grounded in current research that has been verified through classroom practice, the report offers a vision that all educators across the province can use to promote a whole-school, whole-board approach to literacy instruction in the Junior Division. It also serves as a resource for parents[1] and communities to use in building the strong home-school-community partnerships that are essential for literacy learning and overall student achievement.

CONTEXT FOR THE REPORT

Literacy for Learning continues an ambitious province-wide process of consultation and professional learning on literacy education. It bridges the work of other expert panels, whose reports have focused on early reading in Kindergarten to Grade 3 and later literacy in Grades 7 to 12. Figure 1 shows this series of reports in context.

Figure 1. Recent Expert Panel Reports on Literacy in Ontario Schools

Report	Focus
Early Reading Strategy: Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario (Kindergarten to Grade 3) *Stratégie de lecture au primaire : Rapport de la table ronde des experts en lecture* (January 2003)	Developed by a bilingual panel of experts who drew practical conclusions from current research to provide educators in the English- and French-language school systems with consistent, strategic guidance about effective reading instruction in the early school years.

(continued)

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[1] In this report, the word *parent* is intended to include guardians, caregivers, and other family members who can help children learn.

Figure 1 *(continued)*

Report	Focus
Literacy for Learning: Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario (this report) *La littératie au service de l'apprentissage : Rapport de la table ronde des experts en littératie de la 4e à la 6e année* (October 2004)	Developed by a bilingual panel of experts to promote a whole-school, whole-board approach to literacy planning for Grades 4–6 in English- and French-language schools. The planning framework calls on educators to build on the foundations laid in a child's early school years and to prepare each child for more advanced and applied literacy learning in later grades and in life.
Think Literacy Success, Grades 7–12: Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario (October 2003)	Developed by an English-language panel of experts to promote literacy learning across the curriculum for all students in Grades 7–12, with a focus on the literacy needs of students at risk.
La littératie en tête de la 7e à la 12e année : Rapport du Groupe d'experts sur les élèves à risque (October 2003)	Developed by a French-language panel of experts to identify and plan for the literacy needs of students at risk in Grades 7–12, with a focus on cross-curricular literacy learning.

EXPERT PANEL ON LITERACY IN GRADES 4 TO 6 IN ONTARIO

Literacy for Learning was prepared by the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, a group formed by the Ministry of Education to draw on the expertise of educators in English, French, and Aboriginal communities. Members – teachers, consultants, coordinators, principals, school board administrators, and academics – formed an intense learning community that shared research, experiences, and a passionate commitment to student learning. Together they produced this report for the benefit of all educators, all communities, and all children in Ontario.

CO-CHAIRS

Réjean Aubut
Directeur des services pédagogiques
Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien

Judith Taylor
Instructional Co-ordinator, Literacy
Peel District School Board

MEMBERS

Gwen Babcock
Classroom Teacher
Limestone District School Board

Élaine Constant
Directrice adjointe
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

Debra Duncan Peacock
Coordinator, Program and Instruction
Waterloo Region District School Board

Martine Leclerc
Professeure, Département des sciences de l'éducation, Université du Québec en Outaouais

Gillda Leitenberg
District-Wide Coordinator, English/Literacy
Toronto District School Board

Gabrielle O'Reilly
Curriculum Coordinator
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

Cheryl Potvin
Curriculum Consultant
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Colleen Russell
Central Coordinating Principal, Literacy K–10
Toronto District School Board

Michael Schmitt
Superintendent, Program and Student Services
Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Colette Séguin
Enseignante
Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Grandes Rivières

Ivor Sinfield
Elementary Pre-Service Coordinator
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Tania Sterling
Resource Teacher
Peel District School Board

Kim Smith
Principal
York Region District School Board

Luanne Martin
Classroom Teacher, Six Nations
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Heli Vail
Junior/Intermediate Chair and Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education, Nipissing University

2 LITERACY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Literacy in the twenty-first century is constantly evolving. Advances in technology and the globalization of human society – through migration, travel, trade, and the arts – continue to increase our appetite for and capacity to produce and share texts; at the same time, they require more effort and skill from people striving to stay informed and involved in the global community. Educators today need to think beyond the conventional focus on print-based literacy to equip students for forms of literacy and roles in life that may not yet exist on the cultural, social, and economic landscapes.

LITERACY DEFINED

Literacy is defined in this report as the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas. It enables us to share information, to interact with others, and to make meaning. Literacy is a complex process that involves building on prior knowledge, culture, and experiences in order to develop new knowledge and deeper understanding. It connects individuals and communities, and is an essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society.

In the early school years, literacy instruction introduces children to the fundamentals of reading and writing and nurtures an awareness of language and motivation to learn. Literacy instruction in the junior grades takes students another giant leap forward by engaging them purposefully with a wide variety of texts and technologies that will help them develop as active, critical, responsible, and creative communicators for the twenty-first century. As literate learners, students continually explore new texts and new ways of understanding familiar texts. Along the way, they develop and refine the capacity to create and share texts of all types, putting the technology of their time and place to its best uses. They discover new ways to access the resources of a multicultural, multimedia world.

TEXTS OF ALL TYPES

Most children live in a text-rich environment, but not all the texts they meet are in print form. Understanding that texts exist in many forms helps students and teachers to apply literacy learning to the wider world, and leads to deeper thinking and more effective communication.

A text is a representation of ideas that can be shared over distance and time.

A text is a representation of ideas that can be shared over distance and time. In our technologically and culturally complex world, texts come in a wide variety of forms, in both print and electronic formats. For the purposes of this report, the word *text* is used to describe information and ideas that are captured in print and electronic forms, using words, graphics, and other visual elements. The forms include print resources that are normally associated with reading and writing instruction, such as novels, picture books, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and advertisements. They also include electronic texts found in Web pages, Web logs (blogs), e-mail, Internet chat rooms, hand-held text messaging devices, and multimedia presentations. Beyond words, texts can be understood to include the visual and graphical images that convey meaning on signs and packaging, in cartoons, through charts, maps, diagrams, graphs, timelines, storyboards, movies, video games, and more.

Some researchers describe texts as *artefacts*, to draw attention to the fact that they are made by humans and can be shared over distance and time.

The term *multimodal texts* is sometimes used to draw attention to the many ways in which texts can be produced and shared – in print, electronic, and graphical forms.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY ENGAGEMENT

Literacy is closely linked to culture. The texts that children see, use, and create in the junior grades send a strong message about the culture of learning in their school and in Ontario. Students who see themselves reflected and affirmed in classroom texts and in instruction (that is, those who experience language, culture, and identity ***engagement***) come to appreciate that reading and writing are genuinely ***for*** them and ***about*** them. In addition to having their own identity affirmed in this way, junior students learn about the cultures and identities of others in the classroom and in the community, and begin to appreciate the richness and diversity of Canadian society. From this firm foundation, students learn to live with respect and intellectual vigour in a multicultural world, and they build the higher-order thinking and critical-literacy skills they need for responsible citizenship and lifelong learning in the twenty-first century.

Language traditions and language rights influence the nature and development of a culture. Canada currently recognizes two official languages – English and French. Through federal legislation, all Ontario children have a right to an English-language education. Parents with rights under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are also guaranteed the option of a French-language education for their children.

Aboriginal communities in Ontario are seeking to preserve and develop their languages through community-based literacy learning. As well, Ontario has a long tradition of growth through immigration, with many people from around the world bringing their language, culture, and experiences to this country. With increasing globalization and the shift to an information economy, the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all people become a resource base that can enrich life and benefit all Ontarians.

English-Language School System

English is the language of daily life for the majority of people in Ontario. Children who attend English-language schools are immersed in the language of instruction both inside and outside the school – on street signs; at the movies and on radio and television; through the Internet; in stores, libraries, and more. This English-language environment provides parents and teachers with a wealth of opportunities to connect literacy with a child's daily life and experiences.

For students who are learning English as a second language or who are attending a French immersion program in the English-language system, it is important to provide "scaffolded" support that builds on the student's first language. By scaffolding on the first language, the teacher helps students make meaningful connections that support literacy development in the language of instruction, while enabling students to develop content knowledge in all subjects.

> "Scaffolding is the process by which the teacher (though it could be another adult or peer) organizes learning that is unfamiliar or beyond a learner's ability in such a way as to assist the child in carrying out the new task."
>
> *(Harrison, 2004, p. 93)*
>
> "Knowledge is built up gradually, and during this process learners relate what they already know to the new information being presented to them. As a result, the new knowledge is brought into interaction with prior knowledge."
>
> *(Tardif, 1992, p. 32)*

The same approaches to teaching and learning apply in all literacy programs for all students, regardless of their first language or language of instruction. They include a strong oral language component, scaffolding on prior knowledge and experiences, and a focus on higher-order thinking and critical-literacy practices.

French-Language School System

Because students who attend French-language schools often live in predominantly English-speaking communities, they do not generally experience the same level of immersion in the language of instruction once they step outside the school. French-language schools, therefore, face an additional challenge and have an additional role to play in preserving and promoting the French language and culture for their students.

Parents who choose a French-language education for their children need to work in partnership with the school to encourage the children to speak as often as possible in the language of instruction, so that they become proficient in French and are able to enjoy the benefits of bilingualism. At the same time, parents and teachers need to understand the practical value of scaffolding on students' first language in order to build confidence and competence in the language of instruction, and they need to support students in developing their content knowledge in all subjects while they develop proficiency in French.

FOUR ROLES OF A LITERATE LEARNER

Literacy in the twenty-first century involves not a single skill, but a complex interaction of skills and resources that the literate learner draws upon to make meaning from texts of many types. One approach to understanding this interactive process is offered by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke in their "four resources model" (1990 and later works; see "Sources and Resources" in this report). The four resources are also referred to as "four roles" or "four families of practices". To be literate, students must learn to make meaning from texts, to break the "code" of texts, to use texts functionally, and to analyse and critique texts. One family of practices does not stand alone as more important than the others; students integrate all four simultaneously when they read, write, listen, and speak. Freebody notes that "any program of instruction in literacy, whether it be in kindergarten, in adult [second-language] classes, in university courses, or any points in between, needs to confront these roles systematically, explicitly, and at all developmental points" (Freebody, 1992, p. 58).

Figure 2 offers a brief overview of the four roles of a literate learner. These roles are described more specifically in sections 9, "Reading", and 10, "Writing".

Figure 2. Four Roles of a Literate Learner

The Literate Learner

Meaning Maker

Uses prior knowledge and experience to construct and communicate meaning when reading, writing, and speaking

Code Breaker

Recognizes and uses the features and structures of written, visual, and spoken texts, including the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, conventions, sentence structure, text organization, graphics and other visuals to break the "code" of text

Text User

Understands that the purpose and audience help to determine the way a text is structured, the tone, the degree of formality, and the sequence of components, and uses this knowledge to read, write, and speak

Text Analyser

Understands that texts are not neutral, that they represent particular views and perspectives, that other views and perspectives may be missing, and that the design and messages of texts can be critiqued and alternatives considered

(Based on Freebody & Luke's "four resources model", 1990. The panel has elaborated on the four resources model to suggest four roles of a developing junior learner.)

DEVELOPING CRITICAL-LITERACY SKILLS

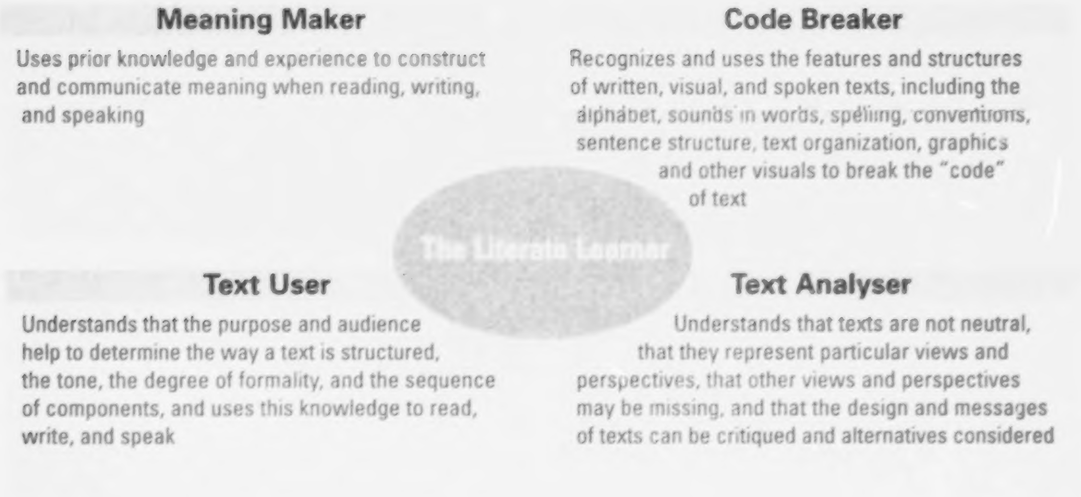
Students today experience a constant stream of ideas and information – online, in print, and through electronic games and mass media. As they move into the junior grades, they encounter an ever-widening range of texts. They need skills to determine where to direct their attention and how to interpret messages and use them appropriately.

Critical-literacy skills give students the tools they need to think more deeply about the texts they meet and the texts they create. They challenge the learner to look beyond the literal message, to read between the lines, to observe what is present and what is missing, and to reflect on the context and the way the author constructed the text to influence the reader. Critical literacy goes beyond conventional critical thinking, because it focuses on questions about fairness, equity, and social justice.

Students in the junior grades typically think that texts are true simply because they are in print or online. They need to be taught how to approach texts, including Internet sources, with an inquiring, analytical mind (Daguet, 2000). Practising critical literacy encourages students to question the authority of texts and to address issues of bias and perspective. Students learn that texts are not neutral: all texts in some way reflect the choices, positions, and beliefs of their creators, and could be constructed differently to present different understandings.

Critical literacy is not a "thing" to be added to the literacy program or something to do each day for ten minutes before lunch. It is a lens or overlay for viewing texts that becomes a regular part of classroom practice. Ways to promote critical literacy are discussed in more detail in section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

Figure 2 Four Roles of a Literate Learner



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3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR JUNIOR LITERACY

Effective literacy learning in the junior grades is planned, purposeful, and transformative. The members of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario distilled their shared beliefs, understandings, and insights from research and classroom practice into seven guiding principles for junior literacy, described below. Building on these guiding principles, Figure 3 on page 14 provides a broad framework for planning and supporting literacy learning in the junior grades. The guiding principles reflect the recurring themes of this report. The planning framework provides a snapshot of many of the key messages.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Literacy learning in the junior grades can transform children's lives.

Literacy is a gateway to learning. Through rich literacy programs, students discover the links among reading, writing, thinking, and knowing. They learn to engage with new ideas as they read, write, and talk about a broad range of themes, topics, experiences, and perspectives in a multimedia, multicultural world. Junior students acquire insight into their own thoughts and growing literacy expertise from purposeful teaching that immerses them in printed, visual, and electronic texts and guides them to make personal connections to the texts they read and write.

2. The goal of all literacy instruction is to enable students to make meaning from and in the wide range of texts they will encounter and produce at school and in the world.

Students in the junior grades come to realize that the search for deeper meaning is at the heart of the reading process, and that talking, writing, and using various visual and technological text forms enables them to refine, extend, and reflect on their thinking. To make meaning, students must apply higher-order thinking processes to reveal the big ideas, themes, and issues in texts. In doing so, they are provided with opportunities to connect a specific text to the human experience. As students read, write, and reflect, they make vital links between their own knowledge and experience and new viewpoints, information, and questions, thereby acquiring an ever-expanding view of the world and an ever-growing understanding of their own lives and the lives of others. Effective junior literacy programs continuously demonstrate that all learning supports and extends the search for meaning, and that the skills, processes, and strategies learned in the classroom can be used to develop new insights and perspectives in the world.

3. **All junior students can develop as literate learners when they receive scaffolded support that prepares them for higher learning and growing independence.**

Learning starts with what the individual student already knows and can do. From this point, the teacher provides instruction and scaffolded support aimed at moving the student along a developmental continuum to new literacy learning and growing independence. Teachers respond to the diverse cultural, linguistic, academic, and personal learning needs of their students by artfully tailoring their instruction to build on each student's strengths and interests. Differentiated teaching strategies, resources, topics, and supports help to ensure that all students have a point of entry and a successful journey from their current level of understanding towards new skills, strategies, and competencies that will equip them to handle increasingly complex texts and literacy activities. Junior students develop confidence in themselves as learners when they participate daily and fully in rich, dynamic literacy events.

4. **Students are motivated to learn when they encounter interesting and meaningful texts on topics that matter to them.**

Teachers capitalize on the natural curiosity and social nature of junior students by offering learning activities that require collaboration, problem solving, and a search for new information, new ideas, and alternatives. Effective literacy programs in the junior grades provide reading and writing opportunities based on topics that relate to the student's world and that engage students in using electronic, visual, and artistic media to gather and express new ideas and information. The talking, interaction, and inquiry that take place in successful junior literacy classrooms spark the interests of junior learners and result in high levels of learning. As teachers engage the minds and energies of their students in a classroom environment in which the students feel free to take risks, they equip their students with a broad range of learning strategies and skills that provide a foundation for lifelong learning.

5. **Teachers continually assess the literacy learning of their students in order to design classroom activities that will promote new learning for each student.**

Assessment and teaching occur simultaneously in the junior classroom. Teachers use observation and a wide range of assessment tools to acquire insight into students' current skills, strategies, interests, and learning needs. They get students to talk about their reading, writing, and thinking, and about the content, ideas, strategies, and processes they are using. Teachers give students the language and techniques to describe their learning by modelling and thinking aloud about their own literacy processes.

In ongoing conversations about learning, teachers provide constructive feedback to students, give them information to identify, support, and confirm what they know and can do, and help them set goals for further learning. Junior students become skilled in self-assessment and learn to monitor their success as learners. Teachers understand the difference between assessing student learning and evaluating independent student work, and they delay the judgement associated with evaluation until students have had frequent opportunities to practise and apply new learning and to refine their control of the skills and strategies they are developing.

6. **Teachers continually develop their professional knowledge and skills, drawing on lessons from research to improve their classroom practice.**

To develop their professional expertise, teachers and administrators within and beyond the Junior Division form professional learning communities that engage in conversations, collaboration, and professional activities related to current research, professional literature, classroom practices, and home and community connections. They examine strategies to support higher-order thinking and language acquisition, and explore the impact of personal and cultural identity on literacy learning in the junior grades. They participate in "action research" to support school planning, instruction, and assessment, and to address local needs related to second-language learning, gender differences, and other considerations. Independently and collaboratively, they develop the habit of reflecting on their professional practices to find ways to sustain and improve student learning.

7. **Successful literacy learning in the junior grades is a team effort, requiring the support of the whole learning community – including teachers at all grade levels, school administrators, support staff, the board, parents, and community members.**

It takes a whole school community to help junior learners become skilled and confident readers, writers, talkers, listeners, and thinkers who can use literacy to enhance their own lives and the lives of others. The school community makes a conscious effort to understand and build on the personal and cultural backgrounds and experiences of all students, and to involve parents as active partners in literacy learning. It promotes the school as a family-friendly environment, and encourages students to reflect positively on the connections among what they learn at home, at school, and in the community.

Teachers and school administrators serve as mentors or coaches to parents and guardians, helping them to develop strategies for supporting their children's literacy progress outside of school. They also seek regular opportunities to talk to parents and guardians about their children's literacy development and to learn about the cultures, languages, and background experiences that their students bring to the classroom and that form a foundation for the students' literacy learning.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR JUNIOR LITERACY

Figure 3 shows a broad framework for planning and supporting literacy learning in the junior grades.

Figure 3. Planning Framework for Effective Literacy Instruction in the Junior Grades

Junior Learner

Prior knowledge and experiences; personal and cultural identity; physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; family connections

Teacher

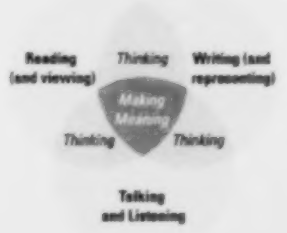
Beliefs, understandings, and reflective practice, based on current research

Assessment and Planning for Instruction

Ongoing assessment – before, during, and after instruction
Student involvement in assessment, and student reflection on how to improve
Varied, equitable, and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge and skills
Literacy instruction and assessment integrated across the curriculum

Goals of Effective Literacy Instruction

To enable junior students to develop as active, creative, and critical users of spoken, visual, and print texts in a multicultural, multimedia world



To promote:

- independence
- motivation
- comprehension
- higher-order thinking
- fluency

Environment

is:

- intellectually challenging
- flexible
- interactive
- engaging/relevant
- risk-free

includes:

- choice
- variety of groupings
- technology and multimedia
- rich, varied, and inclusive resources

Teaching and Learning

are characterized by:

- blocks of time
- integration of reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking
- cross-curricular connections
- higher-order thinking
- critical literacy
- collaborative learning
- a climate of inquiry
- differentiated instruction
- assessment for learning
- modelling and demonstrating

Building School Success

requires professional and inclusive conversations with all partners, addressing:

- a shared vision and culture
- assessment
- classroom practices
- support for all students
- family and community engagement
- targeted resources
- professional learning
- shared leadership

4 THE JUNIOR LEARNER

For many reasons, students enter the junior grades at different points on the learning continuum and they progress at varying rates. Some students are just beginning to read or write fluently in the language of instruction, while others may be experienced writers and strategic readers. As they proceed through the junior grades, students continue to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Understanding how these changes influence the development of literacy helps educators to plan instruction and organize the school environment to improve student learning. The challenge for educators is twofold: to plan broadly for the needs of children ranging in age from eight to twelve years and to address the specific needs of individual students who each bring a unique combination of experiences, interests, and abilities to the classroom.

KEY MESSAGES

- There are many starting points for literacy learning in the junior grades, and no single point where all junior students should be at any given time.
- Students bring to the classroom a wide range of abilities, needs, experiences, cultures, and values, which influence how they learn.
- Throughout the junior grades, students experience significant changes – physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially.
- To engage students in literacy learning, educators need to affirm the personal and cultural identity of each student and to guide all students to a growing awareness of the powerful influence of language and literacy on individuals and groups.
- In the junior grades, it becomes increasingly important to consider how gender differences may influence the texts, topics, and instructional approaches that engage both boys and girls.
- Junior students thrive in schools that are family-friendly and in families that are school-friendly.

RANGE OF JUNIOR LEARNERS

In any junior classroom, students will be at varying stages of development. Some will be operating at a primary level, while others may have already progressed to the intermediate level. Each student's progress in literacy and in specific subject areas will be influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including his or her physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development, prior knowledge and experience, language background, learning strengths and needs, interests, cultural context, family context, attitudes about learning, and self-image as a successful learner.

Figure 4. Ranges of Development Among Junior Learners

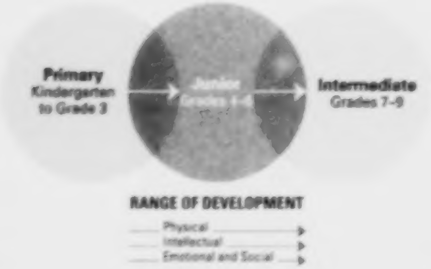


Figure 4 illustrates the ranges of development among junior learners in very general terms. Any given student may be more advanced along one continuum or in some subjects and learning situations than others.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

Junior students undergo many physical changes, and the rate of physical development from one individual to another varies widely in this age range. In general, however, they continue to acquire greater control over their bodies and can sit and pay attention for longer periods of time.

What Teachers Do: Teachers provide an active and varied learning environment that offers students opportunities for movement, which may include drama and role playing. They engage students in sustained reading and writing in longer blocks of uninterrupted time.

INTELLECTUAL CHANGES

Intellectually, junior students develop in depth and breadth. Their cognitive and language abilities improve, which increases their capacity for problem solving and wordplay. Their vocabulary is increasing, but the language they use to express themselves (their *expressive language*) tends to lag behind the language they understand (their *receptive language*). They acquire a greater appreciation of the subtleties in different texts and in humour. They see themselves as readers and writers. However, the literacy development of students in a typical classroom varies widely. Their interests greatly influence what and how much they read and write.

Throughout the junior grades, students' attention spans are increasing. They develop a desire to learn more about topics that interest them, and take a more active role in their learning. In addition, they begin to demonstrate preferences for particular learning styles, seek answers to specific questions, and become more sophisticated thinkers.

They develop an understanding of the concept of time and spatial relationships. They can contribute a critical judgement about social issues. They begin to apply logical rules and reasoning, and to move gradually from being able to identify and solve concrete problems to being able to identify and solve abstract ones. Their thoughts are flexible and reversible. Because they can understand more complex language and styles, their higher-order thinking skills develop more quickly than at younger ages.

What Teachers Do: Teachers encourage students to use thinking strategies to solve problems, puzzles, and riddles. They engage students' interest with anecdotes, mysteries, humour, wordplay, facts, fiction, inquiry, and research on a range of topics; expose them to a wide variety of multimedia texts in print, electronic, and graphical forms; and invite them to discuss, question, reflect on, and analyse what they see, hear, and experience. Teachers challenge students to "dig deeper" for meaning, to wonder about possibilities, and to discuss contradictions. They help students put their thoughts into words and their words into writing; draw attention to the writer's craft in texts that engage students' interest, and encourage them to try similar language and techniques in their own writing; and model reflective thinking and language and effective strategies and processes for learning, comprehension, and problem solving.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

Junior students are beginning to search for their identity, beliefs, and values. They have a more flexible sense of right and wrong than they did when they were younger. They develop a sense of justice, concern, and empathy for others, and become less egocentric. They realize that some of their attitudes, values, and standards differ from those of their siblings, their parents, and other adults. They often challenge the adult world and test many of the boundaries that are set for them.

While they question and challenge the adults around them, they increasingly seek support and identity from their peers. Junior students become more concerned with belonging to peer groups. They begin to develop a more defined understanding of gender roles, and gender becomes a regulator of their social interactions. They want to be part of a group, which may foster inclusive or exclusive behaviour. Towards the end of the junior years, some students may experience fluctuations in their responses to social and emotional situations.

Junior students' role models extend beyond parents and teachers to include characters from television, movies, sports, and books. Students begin to find their own place in society – for example, they may venture into online chat rooms to expand their social circles beyond the home and school. They look ahead to independence and start to think about possible careers. Qualities of leadership emerge. They seek opportunities to test their own skills and abilities.

What Teachers Do: Teachers provide plentiful opportunities for students to talk and interact in flexible and dynamic groupings, including small groups and pairs; they model and help students to create a collaborative learning environment where all students feel affirmed, support each other's learning, and are prepared to take chances; and they extend opportunities for collaborative learning that include learning buddies in other grades. They expose students to various points of view in a range of media, while modelling and providing opportunities for active listening, debate, discussion, and persuasive argument. They also expose students to positive role models through biographies, historical texts, informational texts, current events, and literature in many genres, and encourage students to discuss, role-play, and critically analyse characters, and to reflect on their responses to role models and characters.

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The central question of the junior student's life is, Who am I? Clues to personal identity and culture lie in many places, including the student's gender, family, first language, religion, community, hobbies, interests, special abilities, and prior schooling. Students bring all these aspects of personal identity into the classroom, and all these aspects influence how they learn. Junior students need to have their identity and culture affirmed as a starting point for further learning. They need to see the connections between who they are, what they value, and what they are learning in school in order to make sense of the learning and integrate it into their whole being. Researchers refer to this as *identity engagement*, and describe it as essential to language development and academic success (Cummins, 2000).

What Teachers Do: Teachers ask students about themselves, their attitudes, and interests; they do not assume that any one aspect of a student's cultural or personal identity is the defining characteristic of that student. They expose students to a wide variety of texts and topics, paying particular attention to those that positively reflect the identity, culture, and interests of the students and the wider community. They provide opportunities for students to both read and write about things that interest them, and encourage students to reflect on what they think and feel about the texts and characters they encounter, how they are influenced by the writer's craft and message, and why others may have different responses to the same text.

GENDER

Large-scale achievement data, including that from the province-wide assessments of literacy achievement levels in Grades 3 and 6 administered by Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), show a discrepancy in both the attitudes to literacy and the achievement levels in literacy of boys and girls. The gender gap tends to increase with age, with girls consistently demonstrating higher performance levels than boys in many areas. Results of the EQAO assessments show that fewer boys than girls like to read and write, fewer boys than girls feel that they are good readers and writers, and fewer boys than girls read outside of school.

What Teachers Do: For ways teachers can engage and support boys in literacy learning, see "Supporting Both Boys and Girls", page 42 in section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

Research indicates ...

- **There are three main differences between boys and girls as readers: girls read more than boys; gender is the biggest factor in determining what children read; and girls consistently achieve better results than boys in reading tests (Barrs & Pidgeon, 1994).**
- **Girls write more than boys, are more self-directed when writing, and find it easier to begin writing tasks. Boys are more likely to have difficulties getting started and generating ideas for their writing (Millard, 1997).**
- **An effective practice that seemed to have a positive effect on both boys and girls as readers was to give them considerable freedom to explore different texts in different ways, while also giving them highly structured opportunities to talk and write together about what they were reading. Schools need to build a reading culture that both encompasses and expands the range of all students' reading interests (Moss, 2000).**

FAMILY CONTEXT

Junior students thrive in schools that are family-friendly, and in families that are school-friendly. They are better able to draw meaning from their school experiences and apply that meaning in other contexts when they sense that school is a valued and vital part of the bigger world around them. Most families, students, and teachers value strong family-school partnerships at all grade levels; however, these partnerships tend to decline in the junior grades unless schools and teachers make a conscious effort to sustain and develop them at each grade level. Students provide a vital link between the home and school, but they need information and guidance about how to help maintain this link (Epstein, 1995).

What Teachers Do: For ways teachers can engage families in and help them support the literacy learning of their children, see "Family and Community Engagement," page 96 in section 4, "Building School Success".

5 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Effective planning and classroom management create the necessary time, space, and structure for literacy learning. Junior students thrive in an environment that is safe, engaging, organized, interactive, flexible, intellectually challenging, highly supportive, and rich in texts of all types.

KEY MESSAGES

- A productive environment for literacy learning offers spaces, containing movable furniture and equipment, in which students can gather to work collaboratively in flexible groupings and independently.
- Junior students need easy access to a wide variety of texts at a range of reading levels.
- Junior students are drawn into reading and writing by texts that reflect their interests, abilities, and backgrounds, including resources in their first language.
- Well-equipped classroom and school libraries help students who do not have access to information and technology to bridge the gap with those who do.
- Information technology and assistive technology can greatly expand the junior student's access to a world of ideas and a wealth of learning aids. Today's students are part of a technologically complex world that demands new ways of communicating.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A well-organized and flexible classroom provides students with opportunities to become increasingly independent learners. To promote both collaborative and independent learning, the junior classroom includes space for whole-class, small-group, paired, and individual activities, as well as teacher-student conferences. Furniture is easy to move into flexible formations.

Classroom resources are well organized and easily accessible, with plenty of storage (e.g., in book cases, book racks, and book bins). Display spaces include blackboards, whiteboards, and bulletin boards. Resources reflect the interests and needs of the students as well as the goals of the program. Classroom displays change regularly and provide a showcase for student literacy learning, giving much more prominence to student work than to commercially produced materials.

Teachers involve the whole class in organizing and maintaining the space to promote a sense of responsibility and shared ownership.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

A resource-rich classroom stimulates the senses, including the sense of wonder. Resources in the junior classroom should reflect the diverse interests, abilities, and backgrounds of the students, inviting all young learners to explore familiar landscapes and new horizons. These resources provide students with a twenty-first-century appreciation of literacy in its many forms. A wealth of carefully selected texts increases student engagement in learning and provides teachers with opportunities to develop a classroom community that is built on shared understanding and global awareness. Through immersion in a wide range of materials, students begin to make connections between the academic literacy generally associated with the classroom and the texts and literacies they will encounter in all areas of their lives.

While fiction plays an important role in junior literacy programs, expository texts should be equally prominent in the classroom and in instruction. Learning to read critically and to interpret informational texts in print and online becomes increasingly important in the junior grades.

No single text or program can meet the diverse needs of students in the junior classroom. Students need a range of materials, as well as opportunities to choose assignment topics, formats, and so on, and to demonstrate their learning in authentic tasks that assess both their understanding of concepts and their specific literacy skills. Computer technologies, science experiments, visual arts projects, drama presentations, and inquiry-based math problems provide students with authentic reasons to read, write, talk, listen, and think.

It is important for teachers to collaborate in selecting, previewing, and sharing literacy resources for junior classrooms and the whole school. Texts of all types, including texts in other languages for second-language learners, must support student learning and be consistent with the curriculum. A staff team, including a teacher-librarian, can work to ensure a breadth of perspectives and a whole-school approach to resource management.

Print Resources

Print and visual resources recommended for the junior classroom include the following:

- a range of text forms that support learning in all subjects (e.g., narrative, persuasive, and procedural forms; explanations; recounts; poetry)
- collections of books and anthologies on topics and themes in the curriculum (e.g., author studies, mysteries and novels, science magazines, history texts)
- a variety of contemporary popular texts (e.g., graphic novels, comic books, car brochures, sport and hobby magazines, manuals, and almanacs)
- current reference materials (e.g., dictionaries of varying complexity, calendars, thesauri, atlases, encyclopedias, globes, maps, television guides, almanacs, telephone books, writers' handbooks, recreation program schedules, sporting rule books)
- dual-language books and books in the first languages of students
- "visual" texts such as those encountered in everyday life that include, or consist of, graphics (e.g., menus, stamps, posters, signs, logos, advertisements, badges, wall charts, flow charts, family trees, graphs, maps, and blueprints)

Visual Supports

Visual supports for literacy learning in the classroom include the following:

- pocket charts
- reference/anchor charts
- graphic organizers
- word walls
- instruction/vocabulary charts with visual cues where appropriate (e.g., examples of various writing forms, prompts on effective use of reading strategies, proofreading prompts, theme charts)

Other Hands-on Resources

A wide variety of non-text tools and resources can be used to support literacy in all subject areas, and especially in the arts. Teachers can invite students to create and respond to texts using, for example, drama resources (e.g., costumes, props, music to set a mood), visual arts materials (e.g., paper, paint, clay), or writing materials (e.g., sticky notes, highlighters, computers with word-processing and e-mail software, electronic graphic organizers).

TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT LITERACY

Information technology and multimedia resources are essential for students and educators to function as literate learners in today's information-saturated and digital age. Through frequent use of appropriate technologies, students build confidence in their skills and gain access to the growing wealth of information and productivity tools on which literate learners rely. Most students already have some experience with personal computers and electronic games before they reach the junior grades. Those who do not have access to current technologies outside the school are at a significant disadvantage. The school plays an important role in providing equitable access to the tools, information, and new forms of learning on which all students will increasingly rely as they advance through the grades and plan for their future beyond school.

Examples of electronic technology and multimedia resources that support literacy learning include the following:

- computers with Internet access, e-mail, word-processing, and graphics programs, CD-ROMs, and printers – to immerse students in information, ideas, and texts of many types, and to provide them with tools to create and share their own texts (e.g., on a class website or school network)
- digital cameras, video cameras, and scanners – to encourage students to enhance their texts and explore other ways to record and communicate ideas and information
- translation programs and electronic dictionaries – to help second-language learners scaffold on their first language as they build confidence in the language of instruction
- assistive technologies, including Ministry of Education-licensed software for voice recognition, co-writing, and graphic organizing – to help students with special needs view, listen to, and process texts and engage actively in classroom learning
- VCR and DVD players – to use visual texts for ideas and information, to compare a story told in print with the same story told visually, and to engage students in reflecting critically on media works
- audio players and recorders – to engage students in talking and listening in order to promote their interest in reading and writing
- overhead and multimedia projectors – to involve large groups of students in shared reading and writing activities

> "... While modern technology has great potential to enhance teaching and learning, turning the potential into reality on a large scale is a complex, multifaceted task. The key determinant of our success will not be the number of computers purchased or cables installed, but rather how we define educational visions, prepare and support teachers, design curriculum, address issues of equity, and respond to the rapidly changing world."
>
> *(Kleiman, 2000, p. 6)*

Because of the ever-changing and interconnected nature of information technology, educators need to take a whole-school approach as they plan for, learn about, and share technology resources. Part of school planning (described in section 11) involves determining the appropriate equipment, providing professional learning (see section 12), and arranging the most productive physical set-up for the equipment. Whatever the configuration of equipment in the school, teachers need to plan to use the technology regularly and in a meaningful way as both a teaching tool and a learning tool for students.

In the rush to keep pace with changing technology, it is important not to lose sight of tried-and-true technologies that are less complex but effective for their purpose.

Research indicates ...

- Literacy encompasses the ability to access and analyse technology tools (Webber, 2003).
- The purposeful integration of technology can positively influence students by making school meaningful and by offering a stimulating environment (Marton, 1999; Marton, 2001; Tardif, 1998; Papert, 2002).
- Technology engages students and provides learning opportunities that did not exist earlier (Féderation canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants, 2003).
- Technology reinforces basic skills, but also offers opportunities for more complex teaching and learning applications (Heide & Henderson, 1996; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Owyer, 1997).
- The digital divide can be defined as the gap between families that have access to technology in their homes and those that do not (Cunningham, 2004; Statistique Canada, 2004). By granting students opportunities to explore and use technologies in the classroom in integrated and meaningful ways, schools help to reduce the inequity of access (Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003).

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

> "Giving students good books is the essential starting point of any literacy program."
>
> *(Giasson, 2000, p. 71)*

An invaluable school-wide resource for promoting literacy is a well-equipped and professionally staffed school library. Libraries of all types, and especially school libraries, help to bridge the digital and cultural divide between students who have access to texts and information technology and those who do not. The school library is an ever-present and ever-evolving resource as the student advances through the grades and develops as a curious and literate learner.

In addition to the children's collection in the school library, the following school-wide resources can enrich literacy learning in the junior division:

- a book room containing multiple copies of a variety of student texts
- a professional resource library that supports classroom practice and is based on current relevant research (see section 12, "Professional Learning")

6 APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Literacy instruction in the junior grades is characterized by *integrated learning* and *differentiated instruction*. The learning is *integrated* in the sense that it combines reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking, and shows students the practical applications for literacy learning in all subjects at school and in all aspects of their lives. Within the context of this integrated learning, the instruction is *differentiated* in the sense that students read and write different texts and receive different supports depending on their learning needs. Tomlinson (2004) describes the four pillars of differentiated instruction: content (what the students will learn), process (activities), product (accomplishment following a learning period), and environment (physical layout and atmosphere). One or more of these elements can be differentiated in any classroom learning situation.

KEY MESSAGES

- The junior classroom is a community of learners where the ideas, experiences, interests, and learning needs of each student are respected and addressed in reading and writing instruction.
- Junior students need to read and write every day.
- Literacy learning becomes more meaningful when reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking are integrated into subjects across the curriculum, and when students are encouraged to connect what they are learning in school with a growing awareness of the world beyond school.
- Teachers use questioning and inquiry to engage students in higher-order thinking and critical-literacy practices as they read and write.
- Teachers provide scaffolded support to help their students learn new literacy strategies and skills by using processes that involve modelling, guiding, and supporting students as they practise and by monitoring independent student achievement.
- Teachers maximize the learning of all students, including those achieving below and beyond grade expectations, by providing differentiated instruction that involves a variety of teaching strategies, texts, text forms, student groupings, and learning activities.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Literacy thrives in a mutually supportive community of learners. Effective literacy instruction for junior learners is highly collaborative, with plentiful opportunities for genuine discussion and interaction among students and between the student and teacher. Collaborative learning invites students to make choices, derive pleasure from their learning, take risks, practise and refine their literacy and learning strategies, and develop independence. It provides a safe and positive environment for students to engage in the social interactions that are so important to this age group, and to explore the social nature of language and literacy.

Teachers need to explicitly teach and model how to work collaboratively. The professional literature on cooperative learning provides practical guidance for teachers.[2] When the junior classroom functions as a learning community, students and teachers learn to value and draw on the cultural and linguistic resources and prior knowledge that all students bring to the classroom. Literacy instruction in this collaborative environment includes activities and texts that:

- connect to the backgrounds, cultures, and personal identities of the students;
- develop multicultural values;
- provide a wide range of positive male and female role models;
- provide opportunities for students to develop social responsibility and leadership skills.

Research indicates ...

- **Effective literacy teachers create "conversational communities" where talk is central to learning; constantly teach (often individually or in small groups); create classroom environments that encourage collaboration and guide the choices students make while they are engaged in collaborative activities; carefully plan their teaching, and yet remain flexible enough to take advantage of unplanned teaching opportunities; and make creative and purposeful use of a wide range of print and electronic text resources (Allington & Johnson, 2000).**
- **Working in small groups, peer conferences, discussions, keeping a diary and writing personal essays have been viewed as activities that generate a high level of commitment among students (Hébert, 2002).**

---

[2] For example, see Bennett & Rolheiser (2001). Chapter 7 addresses cooperative learning.

TAKING TIME FOR LITERACY

Junior students need to read and write every day. Out of the five hours of instruction time available each day, an effective timetable will provide large blocks of time – ideally two hours – for students to develop their literacy skills, explore topics thoughtfully and thoroughly, engage in research and inquiry in all subject areas, and apply their learning in new contexts. These learning blocks give teachers scope to implement the wide-ranging components of an effective literacy program, including ongoing assessment, targeted instruction to address specific learning needs, and open-ended reading and writing activities that promote higher-order thinking. Learning blocks also provide time for purposeful talk and collaborative learning, and these social activities can be strong motivators for many junior learners to engage in learning activities.

Research indicates ...

- **Students need to spend a lot of time reading to become proficient readers. Effective teachers create many opportunities for students to read and write, rather than engaging them in other, literacy-related "filler" activities (Allington, 2002).**
- **The quantity of reading a student does has a positive effect on the student's level of achievement in reading. Exposure to print significantly predicted differences in reading ability on a fifth-grade reading test (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992).**
- **Students should write regularly – at least four days a week for 35 to 40 minutes – if they are to learn to "think through" their writing (Graves, 1994).**

INTEGRATING LITERACY INTO ALL SUBJECTS

More time for literacy does not mean less time for learning other subjects. In fact, literacy learning provides a way into the increasingly complex ideas and texts that students encounter in all subjects as they advance through the junior grades. By integrating literacy learning into all subjects, teachers equip their students to read and write a wide range of texts, help them to become strategic thinkers and problem solvers, and provide them with opportunities to apply literacy skills and strategies in many different meaningful contexts. The teacher "needs to have a desire to make the text come alive and to experiment with movement, theatre, and visual arts in order to get students involved in the human experience conveyed in literature" (Giasson, 2000, p. 166).

For example:

- In Grade 4 **science**, students could design, draw, and label a simple structure or mechanism, and discuss what supporting information to include in a written explanation so that readers would understand how it works. For **social studies**, they could read about medieval times, and write a letter or diary entry from the point of view of a historical character.
- In Grade 5 **science**, students could devise an experiment that shows the properties of water in its solid, liquid, and gaseous states, and write a procedure that outlines the steps in their experiment. For **math**, they could create a theme chart or classroom display illustrating standard units of measurement for capacity and volume. They could also refer to this chart or display in their science unit.
- In Grade 6 **science**, students could conduct a guided Internet search about flight. For **social studies**, they could choose an explorer and create a box of artefacts, such as maps, letters, illustrations, and other texts, to help them tell a story about that explorer in a presentation to the class.

To make meaningful connections and to deepen their cross-curricular literacy learning, junior students need the stability and continuity that comes from having the same teacher for language arts and a range of other subjects, such as math, social studies, and science. Therefore, schools should avoid "rotary" (moving students from teacher to teacher) as much as possible in the junior grades.

Research indicates ...

- By integrating subjects in the curriculum, teachers are able to create learning that is more relevant to their students and less fragmented (Jacobs, 1989).
- "It is rare that an open environment feeds only one learning situation. And, almost as rarely, does learning arise from a single discipline" (Perrenoud, 1997a).
- In this endeavour, teachers, together with their colleagues, must take every opportunity to find links among different contexts, concepts, and themes being presented. The cross-curricular integration that is made possible by openness among disciplines offers many advantages. It allows the transfer of learning and gives students the opportunity to work simultaneously with any number of ideas (Tardif, 1999).

Students of all ages are motivated to learn when they see how the learning connects to their lives and interests, and how they can use the learning in meaningful ways. Teachers make literacy learning relevant by choosing texts and topics that build on their students' prior knowledge, experiences, first languages, cultures, and personal identities, and by connecting classroom learning with the students' growing awareness of the world beyond school.

See "Language, Culture, and Identity Engagement" in section 2, "Literacy for the Twenty-first Century".

> **"Learning consists of gradually discovering the meaning of a discipline – that is, coming to understand the questions the discipline asks about the world, the methods it uses, and the main theories it constructs."**
>
> *(Develay, 1996, p. 106)*

To prepare students for literacy learning in the twenty-first century, teachers use technologies (e.g., the Internet, digital cameras, recording devices, portable keyboards, electronic dictionaries, translation software, a wide variety of graphics and multimedia programs) that engage students' interests, expose them to a wider range of texts than is available in print, provide them with hands-on learning, and help them connect work done in the classroom to the wired world beyond school.

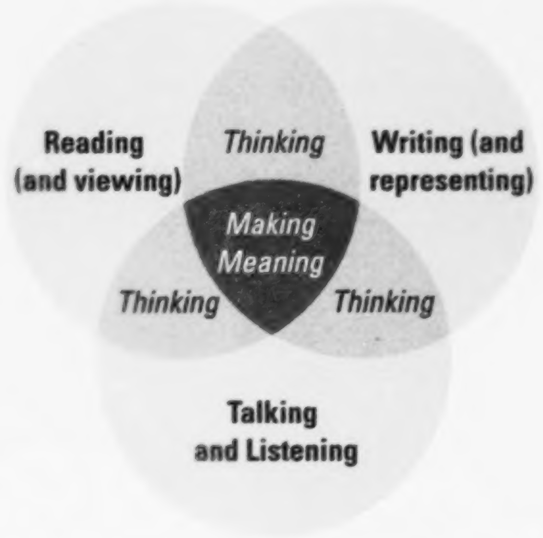
See "Technology to Support Literacy" in section 5, "The Learning Environment".

CONNECTING READING, WRITING, TALKING, LISTENING, AND THINKING

Through literacy learning, students become increasingly aware of the ways in which reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking work together to make meaning (see Figure 5). They experience how strengths in one language area (such as talking) provide a foundation for other areas (such as writing and reading). They learn to construct meaning from their reading and to create meaning in their writing. In the junior grades, students learn to read like writers and write like readers by talking and thinking about the meaning, form, language, and effect of what they read and write. Purposeful talk about a wide range of texts helps students extend their knowledge of themselves and the world, make new connections, and acquire insights that will deepen their reading comprehension and enrich their written work.

Through reading instruction, junior students learn how form follows function in effective writing – in other words, how authors choose an appropriate text form to serve their purpose and to convey their meaning. Students learn how texts are constructed, and how to differentiate the kind of writing needed to create a note, a story, a report, a poem, or a persuasive letter. Teachers model and prompt students to talk about the author's technique, choice of language, and use of headings to create an effect or to signal a particular meaning. Students, in turn, learn to use these text features when writing for particular purposes and audiences.

Figure 5. Using Reading, Writing, Talking, and Listening in Combination to Make Meaning



Research indicates ...

Effective literacy teachers place emphasis on the functions and processes of reading and writing; provide a context for learning through the use of meaningful activities and texts; and understand the importance of communication and composition in students' literacy work (Wray & Medwell, 2001).

DEVELOPING HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

Effective readers and writers use intentional thinking skills to regulate their reading and writing processes, to formulate ideas, to solve problems, and to make meaning. Using higher-order thinking, they are able to move beyond rote learning and literal interpretation to a deeper, more discerning understanding of texts.

Several *taxonomies* (ways of classifying ideas and information) have been developed to describe and study higher-order thinking skills. These taxonomies typically make reference to sorting, classifying, comparing, making predictions, relating cause and effect, drawing conclusions, generating new ideas, solving problems, testing solutions, and making decisions (McGuinness, 1999). *Bloom's taxonomy* is one approach used widely by educators to classify educational objectives and levels of learning. It describes thinking skills as a hierarchy, with knowledge and memory as the foundational skills, followed progressively by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Figure 6 shows how teachers can use a revised version of Bloom's taxonomy in literacy instruction to guide student inquiry and to promote higher-order thinking.

Figure 6 shows how teachers can use Bloom's work, and Anderson and Krathwohl's revisions of that work (2001), to guide student research.

Figure 6. A Taxonomy to Promote Higher-Order Thinking

Learning level	Definition	What the student will do
CREATE	Combine elements to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure	Develop an alternative hypothesis; devise a procedure to accomplish a task; invent a product
EVALUATE	Judge the value of ideas, materials, or products	Detect inconsistencies within a process or product; judge the appropriateness of procedures and ideas to solve particular problems
ANALYSE	Break down an idea into its constituent parts and determine how the parts are related to one another and to an overall structure	Differentiate between important and unimportant parts of presented material; determine how parts fit together; deconstruct presented materials to determine point of view and underlying intent
APPLY	Carry out a procedure to perform exercises or to solve problems	Apply previously learned information to familiar and unfamiliar tasks
UNDERSTAND	Construct meaning from instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communication	Change form of representation; find specific examples; categorize; summarize; draw logical conclusions; compare ideas; explain
REMEMBER	Retrieve relevant knowledge from long-term memory	Recognize and recall information from long-term memory

(The panel has used current research – Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001 – to elaborate on Bloom's taxonomy, showing how it can be used to promote higher-order thinking skills in junior students.)

Teachers help their students to develop higher-order thinking skills by, for example:

- thinking aloud as they read, write, and solve problems with the class;
- encouraging students to think *metacognitively* (i.e., to think about their thinking) and to reflect on their learning;
- asking open-ended questions;
- adopting and teaching a model of inquiry;
- incorporating critical-literacy habits into classroom practices.

Thinking Aloud

Teachers model higher-order thinking strategies as they think aloud about a text, using queries such as, "I wonder if ...", "I don't understand why ...", "This could be different if ...", and "I imagine that ...". By thinking aloud as they read, write, and solve problems with the class, teachers demonstrate both literate talk and effective thought processes.

Using Metacognition

Metacognition is the process of thinking about one's own thought processes. It is one form of higher-order thinking. Using metacognition, students reflect on what they know and need to know, and draw on a variety of strategies to make sense of what they see, hear, and say. Teachers play an important role in modelling how to think metacognitively to construct meaning from texts. Even very young students can develop metacognitive skills when they see these skills modelled and receive explicit instruction in how to use them. Metacognitive skills give students the ability to plan and monitor their own learning. Initially the teacher models the use of metacognitive strategies; ultimately, students monitor their own comprehension (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

> "It is important to give learners the time and opportunity to talk about thinking processes, to make their own thought processes more explicit, to reflect on their strategies and thus gain more self-control. Acquiring and using metacognitive skills has emerged as a powerful idea for promoting a thinking skills curriculum."
>
> *(McGuinness, 1999, p. 2)*

Asking Open-Ended Questions

Teachers encourage the natural curiosity of junior learners and help them to develop as thinkers by asking, and encouraging them to ask, meaningful questions. Using open-ended questions, teachers challenge students to probe ideas, explore possibilities, and examine and develop new perspectives. They invite discussion, rather than dominate it, and open up a dialogue of inquiry that may involve comparison, analogy, hypothesis, conjecture, prediction, analysis, reflection, and critique.

Questions posed by the teacher are only a starting point. It is by posing their own questions that students become thoughtful, inquiry-oriented learners. Students' own questions may begin as "copies" of the teacher's questions but, with practice, the process of inquiry takes root in students' ways of thinking and becomes the basis for the independent construction of meaning. As students investigate questions of interest, they not only develop research skills and content knowledge, but also learn to craft text forms and communicate ideas.

Research indicates ...

- High-level questions that help students make connections from text to text and from text to experience are more effective in promoting achievement in reading than low-level questions that focus on details and restatement (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003).
- Teacher modelling and coaching are highly effective in improving students' fluency in both reading and writing. Guiding and supporting students through texts and helping them create their own questions is more effective than telling students what the text means or what to look for in texts (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003; Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002; Booth, 2001).
- "There is a need to design learning tasks which are not routine but have a degree of open-endedness and uncertainty to permit learners to impose meaning or to make judgements or to produce multiple solutions" (McGuinness, 1999, p. 2).

Adopting a Model of Inquiry

An "inquiry" approach to learning provides students with opportunities to apply a wide range of reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking skills. Many educators have found that student learning improves when schools adopt a consistent model of inquiry and research across all grades and subjects. The Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) studied a wide range of literature and research in the fields of information science and information studies and identified the following four stages as being common to all models of inquiry and research:

Stage 1: *Preparing for research* (e.g., by asking a defining question)

Stage 2: *Accessing resources* (e.g., by locating new sources of information)

Stage 3: *Processing information* (e.g., by evaluating the information and making connections)

Stage 4: *Transferring learning* (e.g., by communicating or presenting the information and by reflecting on the learning)

In describing the importance of a consistent approach to inquiry and research, the OSLA notes: "Students need the fundamental skills and knowledge of inquiry and research to be information literate. Information literacy is a prerequisite for success in all subjects of the curriculum, for preparation for work and further education, and for lifelong learning" (Ontario School Library Association, 1998).

Research indicates ...

- **Inquiry is the driving force behind learning because the subject becomes mobilized by the objective to be achieved. A project is instructive only if it forces the student to develop a strategy and to solve a set of problems (Perrenoud, 1997a).**
- **By turning knowledge into answers to questions that the student is asking himself, the student's project makes it possible to mobilize that knowledge in order to complete the task (Tardif, 1999).**
- **"Careful thought must be given to assigning projects after students have finished reading a book: they should not be asked to do a project after every book. The best thing to do after one has finished a book is often to start another" (Giasson, 2000, p. 165).**
- **To be of value, projects must help the students enhance their comprehension of the texts (Giasson, 2000).**

Developing Critical-Literacy Skills

In elementary schools, reading has traditionally involved the decoding and comprehending of printed texts. With the diversity and increasing complexity of texts in the junior grades, it becomes important for students to move beyond literal comprehension and to think critically about the messages texts contain. Critical-literacy skills equip students with the ability to analyse how authors develop texts in order to influence readers, and give students the knowledge, skills, and confidence to develop their own perspectives and worldview.

Also see "Developing Critical-Literacy Skills" in section 2, "Literacy for the Twenty-first Century".

Texts often introduce students to complex ideas. Students need opportunities to question or deconstruct the author's point of view, to seek out other perspectives, and to develop their own views. As they develop and begin to apply critical-literacy skills, junior students learn to:

- understand that texts of all types – in print and electronic forms – are written from a particular perspective and with a particular voice;
- understand that other perspectives can be applied to the topics in a text, and that these perspectives may be known or unknown to both the reader and the author;
- compare texts (perhaps in different media) to examine how the same issues can be dealt with in different ways;
- interpret texts, and consider other ways in which the information could be presented;
- develop a better understanding of the writer's craft by analysing what authors do to present points of view and to influence their readers.

When introducing students to critical-literacy work, it may be useful to begin with simple, familiar texts that have obvious messages. One effective starting point is to look at magazine advertisements, cartoons, or other texts with significant visual elements. For example, junior students could look at a collection of magazine advertisements for toys and examine the techniques that advertisers use to make children want their products.

Questioning is at the heart of critical literacy programming. Luke, O'Brien, and Comber (2001, p. 116) suggest the following key questions:

- What is the topic? How is it being presented? What themes and discourses are being expressed?
- Who is writing to whom? Whose positions are being expressed? Whose voices and positions are not being expressed?
- What is the text trying to do to you?
- What other ways are there of writing about the topic?
- What wasn't said about the topic? Why?

Critical-literacy practices can be effectively introduced orally during read-alouds or shared reading. Oral discussions give students the opportunity to develop and clarify their understandings within a social situation that exposes them to the opinions of their peers. Critical-literacy practices can also provide students with opportunities to develop written responses to and critiques of texts. Critical literacy requires students to use higher levels of thinking, as outlined in Bloom's taxonomy (see Figure 6 above).

Research indicates ...

- Students need to learn how to interpret or *read* media texts to uncover underlying messages and to avoid being manipulated. They need to be aware of the ways of knowing and deciphering particular types of text, including strategies and techniques that authors use to influence the reader (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).
- Students use a wide range of texts in both electronic and print forms. Many electronic texts contain writing, visual elements, sound, and animation. These texts are read differently than books, and students need to learn the critical skills required to evaluate the messages electronic texts contain (Booth, 2002).
- The Internet is not made up of linear texts; rather, it consists of a real semantic network that reflects the structure of a field of knowledge. The result is not a unidirectional transmission of information, but an opportunity to interact with information in order to solve problems, carry out tasks, experience a process, or complete a project (Meunier, 1997b; Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra, 2003).
- Never in human history has knowledge been so extensive, so varied, and so available (Bernhard, 1998). However, students who have access to this "spontaneous" knowledge have not necessarily developed the ability to determine how appropriate the knowledge is, whether the ideas presented on the Web are correct, and especially how to distinguish between true and false information (Reix, 2001; Webber, 2003).
- Teachers need to help students develop the necessary judgement to think critically about information and to use it wisely (Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra, 2003; Papert, 2002; Webber, 2003).

SCAFFOLDING AND THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY

In effective literacy instruction, the teacher provides scaffolded support to help each student grow beyond his or her current level of achievement, while gradually releasing responsibility to the student to help foster independent learning (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Tardif, 1998). Vygotsky's theory of learning describes each student's current level of achievement as the *zone of actual development*, where the student can apply his or her knowledge and skills independently (Vygotsky, 1980). Teachers model and scaffold learning that is just beyond this zone – in what Vygotsky calls the *zone of proximal development* – to stretch each student towards a new or the next level of actual development (see Figure 7). Teachers begin by demonstrating, through modelling and/or thinking aloud, effective strategies for reading, writing, talking, listening and thinking, and then move to coaching or guiding, and eventually arrive at a point where the student practises the skill or strategy independently.

Figure 7. Scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of actual development	Zone of proximal development		New zone of actual development
STUDENT	TEACHER	JOINT	STUDENT
What the student can already do independently	Assistance from teacher, peer, or environment	Transition from receiving assistance to working independently	What the student can do independently

Gradual release of responsibility to the student →

Research indicates ...

- Children may have difficulty grasping new learning independently, but be able to acquire the learning with the support of a more able partner who is often, but not always, the teacher (Tardif, 1998; Vygotsky, 1980; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).
- Good teachers demonstrate how to apply a range of strategies. They do not simply assign and assess work. Teaching involves "showing" and "demonstrating" (Allington & Cunningham, 2002).
- Teachers should provide instructional support for students when introducing unfamiliar knowledge and skills. They should gradually withdraw instructional support as students demonstrate ability to use specific strategies and move towards independence (Morrow, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2003).

FLEXIBLE GROUPINGS

Research has shown that *static-ability groupings* – where students are placed in unchanging groups according to their ability – can have negative effects on student learning (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). Students need opportunities to experience collaborative learning in flexible and dynamic groupings. These groupings evolve and vary in size and composition as required by the task and the needs of all the students. Teachers continually assess their students to determine the groupings that will best meet their needs. A mixture of whole-class, small-group, paired, and individual learning is ideal. Groups can be heterogeneous (mixed) or homogeneous (similar or the same), and can be organized according to needs, interests, abilities, first languages, components of a task, or other considerations. It is *not* productive to stream students into static groupings, as these groupings limit the interaction and feedback that is essential for the development of effective communicators and literacy learners.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

The literacy needs of students in any junior classroom are likely to be complex and varied. For example, some students will have highly developed Internet research skills, while others will have had little or no Internet access; some students will be able to read complex texts with insight and deep comprehension, while others will need help to achieve fluency and basic comprehension; some students will be comfortable discussing ideas in a small group, whereas others will be learning the language of instruction and will need to develop confidence to express themselves orally. While attending to the wide-ranging learning needs and interests of all students, teachers in the junior grades also need the knowledge, skills, and resources to support students with special needs, second-language learners, students who excel in language, and those who are lagging behind in language and literacy development.

Teachers need to adapt their instructional methods to respond to the diverse literacy needs of their students and to promote success for all learners. "Teaching to the middle"

> **Differentiating means "breaking away from didactic instruction, from using the same lesson and the same exercises for every student. Above all, however, it means organizing the work and using teaching strategies in the best possible way for each student."**
>
> *(Perrenoud, 1997b, p. 1)*
>
> **"School administrators serious about developing more responsive classrooms must understand that moving toward differentiation is a long-term change process. Leaders can prepare for this journey by drawing on insights from research about change as well as the experiences of others who have provided effective differentiated learning for students of varying abilities."**
>
> *(Tomlinson, 1999b)*

or "one-size-fits-all" – where all students read the same text, do the same activity, and work at the same pace – rarely meets the literacy needs of all students.

The goal of differentiated literacy instruction is to maximize each student's growth and progress. Differentiated instruction means that students receive qualitatively different instruction, based on their needs, not simply more or less of the same thing. It may require teachers to adapt all aspects of their literacy programming, including teaching strategies, content, resources, assessment methods, and student groupings.

Research indicates ...

"One of the principles of differentiated instruction is the conviction that the difference between students is not a matter of being quick or slow .... Behind the standard, uniform, abstract student is a student ... of flesh and blood who cannot be ignored, especially if we want to help him or her move forward, reach out, and open up to others" (Zakhartchouk, 2001, p. 23).

Characteristics of Differentiated Literacy Instruction

A literacy program built on differentiated instruction is designed and evolves according to the particular needs of the students (Tomlinson, 1999b). However, the following characteristics always apply:

- Teachers have high expectations for all students and build on students' strengths, rather than targeting their weaknesses.
- Assessment guides instruction. Assessment before learning helps the teacher to plan for instruction. All assessment before and during learning provides ongoing, specific feedback for students and teachers.
- Students are active problem solvers, involved in inquiry and in the exploration of important concepts and ideas.
- Tasks allow students various points of entry into the learning and various avenues to demonstrate their learning.
- Students have choice in and ownership of their learning.
- Teachers provide explicit literacy instruction and use a variety of instructional approaches.
- Instructional groupings are dynamic and flexible, and are created and dissolved to meet students' evolving literacy needs and interests. Students work in many different patterns – alone, in pairs, in small groups, and in whole-class contexts. (See "Flexible Groupings" above.)
- Literacy resources at various levels of difficulty and complexity are available to accommodate students' varied reading levels.

Supporting Second-Language Learners

To address the different needs of second-language learners in the classroom, teachers:

- consider a student's literacy in the first language as a foundation for developing literacy skills in the language of instruction;
- provide the background knowledge that students need to understand unfamiliar concepts;
- allow second-language learners to use their first language(s) when necessary to clarify their understanding and to keep up with content learning in all subject areas;
- support the use of translation programs, electronic dictionaries, and other technological tools that can help students acquire access to the language of academic texts and build bridges from one language to another;
- offer choices from a wide variety of reading materials, and provide students with time to read;
- use texts that include situations and characters that represent the experiences and backgrounds of the students;
- integrate the teaching of literacy into other subject areas, such as science and math;
- give appropriately scaffolded instruction;
- encourage higher-order thinking in all aspects of instruction;
- prominently display strategy charts and other visual supports as a reliable reference for students;
- maintain accurate and non-discriminatory records of the students' overall learning development and their progress in developing their level of literacy in the language of instruction.

Supporting Both Boys and Girls

The results of province-wide assessments show discrepancies in the attitudes towards literacy and the achievement levels in literacy of boys and girls. These gaps tend to accelerate from Grades 3 to 6, with girls consistently demonstrating higher performance than boys in many aspects of literacy. To close these gaps and to better respond to the gender-influenced needs of some boys and girls, teachers:

- offer varied forms of literacy instruction, including active-learning opportunities and concrete, step-by-step instruction;
- integrate technology into the literacy program, including visual media and computers;
- consider the different, gender-related interests and text preferences of some boys and some girls, and offer choices that reflect those interests and that include non-traditional reading material, such as comic books, Internet material, and e-mail messages;

- consider differences in fine-motor skills, language development, learning pace, and learning styles, and offer students opportunities to choose activities that allow them to draw on their strengths to show what they know and can do;
- put less emphasis on neatness and handwriting if the learning objectives of an assignment have been met;
- provide manipulatives and other materials that engage students in hands-on learning;
- provide opportunities for flexible and varied groupings (e.g., all boys, all girls, and mixed groupings);
- recognize that some boys may be reluctant to ask for help when they need it, preferring to do things by themselves;
- offer inquiry-based learning, and allow students to ask questions and develop knowledge and skills in their areas of interest.

Supporting Students With Special Education Needs

Students with special education needs include those who are achieving below grade expectations and those who are exceeding them. To address the needs of students who have been formally identified by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) as "exceptional pupils" (as defined in the Education Act) and others with special education needs, teachers:

- provide instruction that is engaging, challenging, and appropriately scaffolded to support student learning;
- present information, concepts, and skills in a variety of ways, using different teaching strategies;
- offer a variety of ways for students to demonstrate what they know and can do;
- offer cooperative learning strategies, where students learn together as a team and assume specific roles and responsibilities for the benefit of the group;
- offer choices in texts, activities, and responses that are appropriate to the full range of students' abilities;
- respect the learning pace of each student.

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

To support literacy teaching and learning in the junior grades, principals and school leaders:

- set high expectations for student achievement in literacy;
- cultivate a shared commitment among all staff to help every student develop strong literacy skills;

- provide regular opportunities for teachers who teach the same students to discuss and collaboratively plan literacy programs for their students (e.g., the special education teacher and the classroom teacher, the librarian and the classroom teacher);
- analyse how the school's timetable supports effective literacy learning, allocate reasonable blocks of instructional time for literacy, and minimize "rotary" in the Junior Division;
- support inquiry-based learning, where students explore issues, big ideas, and questions, including those of particular interest to them, and where they understand what and why they are learning (Routman, 2000);
- promote models of classroom management and instructional approaches that facilitate literacy learning, such as small-group instruction designed to meet a variety of needs and flexible student groupings;
- demonstrate a commitment to critical literacy and higher-order thinking by asking students and teachers questions about the texts they are using;
- value the cultural literacy that exists in the school community and across the province by displaying family stories written in languages other than English, multilingual signs, and books (including dual-language books) that inspire pride in the community and its languages;
- collaborate with parents, community members, students, and teachers to create school-wide literacy celebrations and traditions (e.g., e-mail exchanges with "e-pals" from across the province, letter-writing campaigns, poetry festivals, literature "graffiti" boards) (Harwayne, 2000; Booth, 2002);
- provide a framework outlining the responsibilities of volunteers and educational assistants to ensure that reading and writing instruction and remediation remain the central responsibility of classroom teachers, and ensure that struggling readers and writers have opportunities to learn through sustained interaction with teachers (Allington & Cunningham, 2002);
- organize special interventions to connect with classroom programming.

> **" ... Teachers will need sustained support. They need leaders to help them by providing opportunities to visit differentiated classrooms, with no fear of judgement if there is noise or clutter, giving meaningful targeted feedback about their work with differentiation, and expressing clear appreciation when they have done a good job, or even taken a risk that was less than successful. "**
>
> *(Tomlinson, 1999b, pp. 113–114)*

7

ASSESSMENT

Ongoing literacy assessment is a cornerstone of learning in the junior grades. Teachers continually assess the reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking skills of their students in order to identify each student's strengths and needs, and then use this information to revise instructional priorities for the whole class. Timely assessment information helps students to become more reflective learners, and helps teachers to become more reflective practitioners. Just as literacy is a rich and varied concept that encompasses the skills involved in comprehending and producing a wide range of texts, literacy assessment must provide rich and varied information to support the language development and increasingly complex learning needs of the junior student.

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KEY MESSAGES

- The primary purpose of literacy assessment is to improve students' literacy skills.
- Assessment continually guides the development, implementation, and review of the junior literacy program.
- Literacy assessment provides students with multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do with texts of many types in many media.
- Junior students need to be actively involved in the assessment process and encouraged to reflect on how they can improve their literacy skills.
- Assessments must be developmentally and culturally appropriate for each student in order to provide meaningful information that will improve that student's literacy skills.
- A whole-school approach to the management of assessment information helps teachers and school administrators make the best use of the extensive data they gather during ongoing literacy assessment.
- Literacy assessment provides a framework for engaging teachers, students, parents, and school administrators in an ongoing dialogue about the literacy skills we most value and are striving to help students acquire.

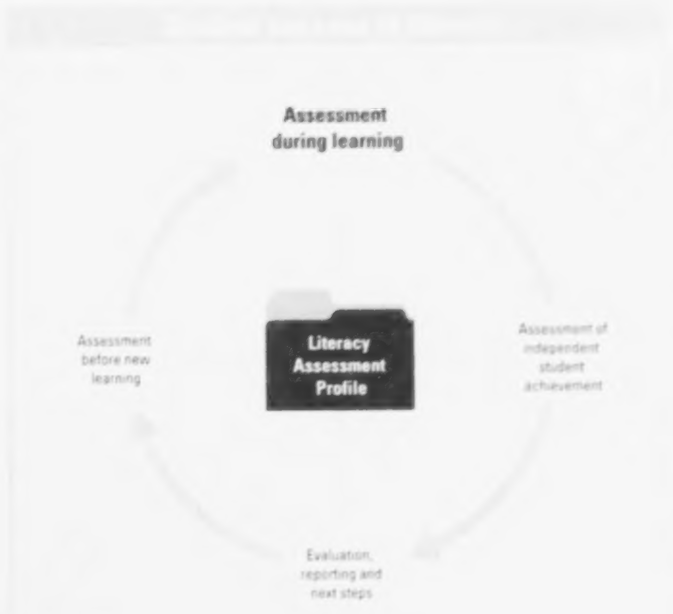
FRAMEWORK FOR LITERACY ASSESSMENT IN THE JUNIOR GRADES

Literacy assessment is a strategic process of gathering and using information about student achievement in reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking in order to improve student learning in all subjects. Literacy assessment has the greatest impact on student achievement when it is embedded in *authentic* learning – that is, when the learning and assessment have meaning and value to the students' world beyond the classroom. Authentic learning helps to motivate and engage students; authentic assessment helps students, their parents, and teachers to see what the students are learning, where they need to improve, and how they could use their growing knowledge and skills in other ways.

Figure 8 shows a broad framework for literacy assessment in the junior grades. In this framework:

- the goal is student success in literacy;
- the four stages in the ongoing assessment cycle are: assessment before new learning; assessment during learning; assessment of independent student achievement; and evaluation, reporting, and next steps. The majority of assessment time should be spent on assessment during learning;
- evidence of the student's reading, writing, and oral language skills is gathered at all stages by the teacher and maintained in an ever-evolving literacy assessment profile (or other similar information system) so that it can be used to inform teaching, learning, and school planning;

Figure 8: Framework for Literacy Assessment in the Junior Grades


Assessment during learning
Assessment before new learning
Literacy Assessment Profile
Assessment of independent student achievement
Evaluation, reporting and next steps

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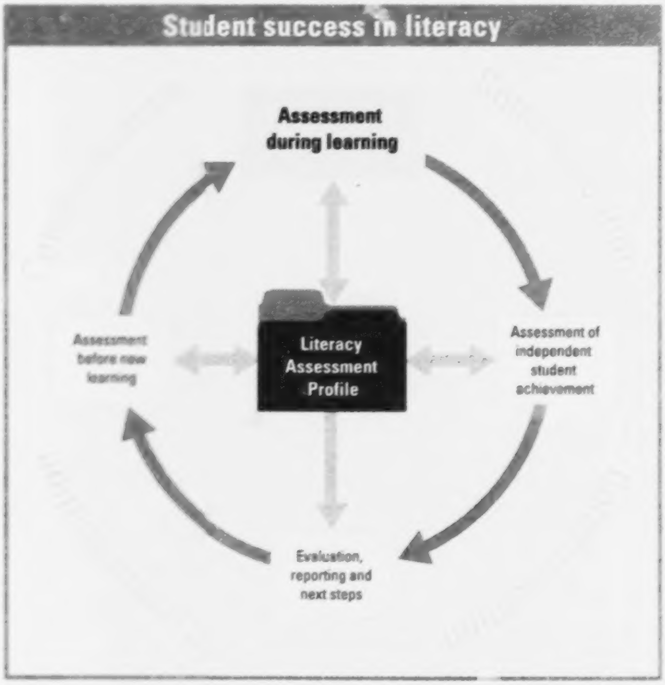
Student success in literacy
Assessment during learning
Assessment before new learning
Literacy Assessment Profile
Assessment of independent student achievement
Evaluation, reporting and next steps

- communication among the teacher, student, parents, and school literacy team is continuous throughout the school year to ensure that everyone knows the literacy expectations and assessment criteria for the junior student and contributes to helping the student succeed.

PLANNING WITH THE END IN MIND

In an effective literacy program, teachers need good information about the students' literacy development before engaging in the instructional process. From this reference point, teachers identify the learning expectations, or clusters of expectations, that will be the focus of instruction in the immediate and longer term. They plan assessment approaches and determine the criteria for assessing reading, writing, and oral/visual communication, using achievement charts as a guide. They determine ways to track student progress and to record the results for evaluation, reporting, and future planning – for example, through anecdotal notes, observations, and checklists that can become part of a student's literacy assessment profile.

LITERACY ASSESSMENT PROFILES

A literacy assessment profile is a purposeful collection of key evidence about a student's level of achievement and progress in reading, writing, and oral/visual communication. The items in a student's literacy assessment profile provide a rich variety of information about the student's reading and writing strategies, understanding of the information and ideas presented in texts, ability to communicate in a variety of forms, and progress in achieving the expectations of the program. The profile provides the teacher with information to do the following:

- plan instruction and supports to meet the student's specific needs
- engage in informed conversations about the student's literacy learning with the student, other teachers, parents, and school administrators
- provide the student with a record of his or her progress as a reader and writer, and a tool for reflection and goal setting
- evaluate the student's achievement at a point in time for reporting purposes, on the basis of a wide variety of evidence that includes the student's independent demonstration of his or her knowledge and skills
- support school success planning

School boards across the province have different names for and approaches to gathering and sharing the assessment information they need to support student learning. The key is to ensure that there is a planned, systematic, whole-school approach to data management that equips teachers, school administrators, parents, and students with the information they need to make meaningful decisions about literacy learning.

Figure 9 lists some suggested components of a literacy assessment profile, and suggests when teachers could gather each component.

Figure 9. Some Suggested Components of a Literacy Assessment Profile

Type of assessment information	When to gather the information			Whether to use it to evaluate student achievement
	Before learning	During learning	After instruction	
Baseline data	✓	✓		No
Records of reading behaviour (e.g., miscue analysis)	✓	✓		No
Interest and attitude surveys	✓	✓		No
Cross-curricular samples of writing (e.g., communications in math, lab reports, research reports)		✓	✓	Yes
Independently completed pieces of writing that represent different text forms			✓	Yes
Observations or rubrics used to assess oral performance		✓	✓	Yes
Student's reflections		✓	✓	No
Independent reading responses (to fiction and informational texts in a variety of genres)		✓	✓	Yes
Performance tasks		✓	✓	Yes
Texts created using a range of technologies		✓	✓	Yes

STAGES IN THE LITERACY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Figure 10 on pages 50–51 provides an overview of the literacy assessment process. It describes some of the considerations for gathering and using assessment information before, during, and after learning, and some of the ways to maintain effective communications throughout the process.

ASSESSMENT FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The Ontario Curriculum notes that second-language learners are often unable to demonstrate their true competence in other subjects because they lack the necessary language skills to understand the lessons or to produce written or oral work. They need time to develop their skills in the language of instruction before their achievement can be assessed by the criteria used for other students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 6). For these students, teachers use the stages of second-language acquisition to assess reading, writing, and oral/visual communication.

The following Ontario Ministry of Education resources provide more information:

- For second-language learners in English schools, see *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8, English as a Second and Language and English Language Development – A Resource Guide* (2001)
- For second-language learners in French schools, see *Actualisation linguistique en français et Perfectionnement du français : Le curriculum de l'Ontario de la 1re à la 8e année* (2002)

ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The Ontario Curriculum offers guidance for the assessment of exceptional students, including those who have not reached the expectations for the grade and those who have exceeded them. Students who have been identified through an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process – and some who have not been formally identified but who are receiving special education support – will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that sets out specific learning expectations and outlines how the school will address these expectations. The IEP also identifies how the student's progress will be assessed and reviewed. For all students with an IEP, it is important that parents understand the expectations that make up the student's program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998, pp. 7–8).

The student's achievement of learning expectations and his or her progress towards meeting the goals identified in the IEP should be monitored and assessed continuously, using a wide variety of methods and techniques. The assessment procedures and strategies

Figure 10. Stages in the Literacy Assessment Process

	Assessment before new learning	Assessment during learning
Purpose	The teacher gathers information about each student's current knowledge and skills in reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking in the language of instruction. This diagnostic assessment helps the teacher to plan the literacy program's priorities and the next steps for instruction for the whole class as well as for individual learners.	The teacher regularly assesses the development of the student's literacy skills and uses this information to adjust instruction and programming to meet the student's changing needs. The most reliable forms of literacy assessment are the teacher's routine observations of student behaviours during daily literacy instruction. Authentic, classroom-based assessment helps the teacher and student to understand the student's achievement level and rate of improvement. It equips the teacher with an extensive record of the student's developing literacy skills, which can be maintained in a literacy assessment profile and referred to in determining next steps for learning.
Focus questions	• What do I want my student to learn? • What can my student already do? • What relevant prior learning or cultural experiences does my student have? • What are the needs and/or learning styles of my student? • How do I engage the student in setting personal literacy learning goals? • How will I differentiate my instruction to meet the needs of my student? • How will I communicate my assessment strategies to my student?	• How will I know my student is achieving the literacy goals? • What other resources do I need to support my student's progress? • Am I providing all students with multiple and varied assessment opportunities to demonstrate what they can say, write, and read? • Am I providing all students with ongoing coaching and feedback? • Am I encouraging all students to reflect on their progress?
Considerations	*Sources of information include:* literacy portfolios and literacy assessment profiles from previous years (see Figure 9 for some suggested components of a literacy assessment profile); the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP); the current stage of language acquisition for second-language learners; learning style inventories; assessment data from province-wide and board-wide assessments; conferences and interviews with the student.	*Multiple and varied sources of assessment information include:* reading and writing conferences; literacy portfolios (which may include a learning log maintained by the student, written answers to quizzes and tests, selected responses to cloze techniques, and selections from the student's response journal); student exhibitions, demonstrations, and performances; teacher observations; and student responses to oral questioning.
Communication	Learning goals are a cornerstone of student success. The teacher involves the student in identifying learning goals that are clear, shared, doable, measurable, ongoing, and timely, and explains the criteria that will be used to evaluate the student's work. Parents become active partners when teachers and students communicate the literacy goals to parents and encourage their support in achieving the goals. To build a whole-school approach to student success, teachers regularly discuss their assessment strategies in a range of staff forums, including in-school review committees. These communications include a review of reading and writing exemplars, as well as discussions about second-language support and support for struggling students.	In ongoing communication with the students and parents, the teacher provides timely, constructive feedback about the student's progress in reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking. This feedback can be given informally or in planned conferences. Ongoing communication helps all partners to share in supporting the student's literacy goals. Ongoing communications with other school staff helps the school team to develop a well-rounded picture of literacy progress in the school and to promote accountability for student progress over time. Staff continually address a range of opportunities and needs for the whole school, including second-language support and support for struggling students.

Results of learning	Evaluation, reporting, and next steps	
After instruction and opportunities to practise, students demonstrate what they know and can do independently. This usually requires students to apply what they have learned in an authentic context that draws on a number of skills, including higher-order thinking. The assessments are summative, in the sense that they aim to sum up the student's cumulative learning and apply it in a particular context at a point in time. Results indicate the student's current level of achievement and may indicate areas needing further development or extension.	At planned intervals throughout the school year, the teacher analyses the collection of assessment information in the student's literacy assessment profile and assigns a level of achievement for reading, writing, and oral/visual communication. The evaluation that results from this analysis reflects the teacher's professional judgement about the student's most consistent achievement (giving consideration to the most recent achievement). The evaluation is recorded on the provincial report card.	**Purpose**
• Has my student met the literacy expectations that were the focus of this assignment or task? • Are these results consistent with other evidence about my student's literacy skills? If not, what could account for the variance? • What do these results tell me about my student's strengths and learning gaps in reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking? • From this evidence, what are the next steps for my student's learning?	• Has my student met the literacy expectations for this term? If not, why not? • Has my student met his or her personal literacy learning goals for this term? • What evidence do I have from my student's literacy assessment profile and other records to support my evaluation? • What are the priorities and next steps for my student's learning? • What information should remain in my student's literacy assessment profile to inform ongoing instruction and support?	**Focus questions**
Effective performance tasks: require higher-order thinking; involve inquiry to construct knowledge; relate to the broad categories of achievement and expectations outlined in the provincial curriculum; make connections across subject areas; and relate classroom learning to the world beyond the classroom.	Teachers understand the difference between assessing student learning and evaluating independent student work, and delay the judgement associated with evaluation until students have had frequent opportunities to practise and apply new learning and to refine their control of the skills and strategies they are developing.	**Considerations**
Independent performance tasks following instruction provide opportunities for the teacher, student, parents, and school staff to gauge the student's progress towards achieving the literacy expectations. In addition to guiding instruction, these results form the basis of evidence that teachers use to evaluate student performance for the report card, and they can also provide data to measure progress towards school and board targets.	The provincial report card is a tool for communicating the student's achievement in reading, writing, and oral/visual communication to the student, the student's parents, and other teachers. The grade is made more meaningful by the teacher's authentic comments about the student's strengths, weaknesses, and the next steps for learning. The reporting process includes an opportunity for a student-parent-teacher conference to review student work, clarify understandings, and plan next steps and goals for learning. Student grades can also be aggregated (collected, sorted, and analysed) in different ways to provide information for school success planning.	**Communication**

normally used may need to be adjusted to give students with special education needs the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the expectations. All accommodations must be suited to the student's strengths and needs. Examples of methods and accommodations to use in assessing students with special education needs include the following (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 14):

- permitting them to demonstrate learning in ways that may differ from those used by the rest of the class (e.g., using various technologies, using a scribe, giving oral instead of written responses to test questions)
- administering their tests individually or in small groups
- providing a quiet environment in which to assess them
- allowing them extra time to write tests or complete assignments
- simplifying the language used in instruction and the questions used in assignments and tests
- encouraging them to evaluate their own progress

Some of these accommodations could be made for all students at certain times.

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

Principals and school leaders need to understand and champion the importance of ongoing literacy assessment as a foundation for student learning and school success planning. Drawing on lessons from research, they do the following:

- collaborate with teachers in the Junior Division and the whole school team to develop common assessment practices for reading and writing
- promote a school-wide approach to managing literacy assessment information – for example, through the use of data management technology and through tools such as the literacy assessment profile
- collect and analyse reading and writing assessment data related to junior students, in cooperation with teachers
- understand that teachers must collect a variety of information about their students' reading and writing performance in order to make informed decisions about the focus of instruction (e.g., students' reading logs, records of students' reading and writing behaviours and oral retellings, results of performance tasks, records of reading and writing conferences and interviews with students)
- encourage teachers to engage in meaningful assessments that allow students at all levels of achievement to demonstrate what they know and can do

- facilitate moderation of assessments, where teachers come together to compare their assessments of student work and their evaluations of student achievement, using anchor papers and exemplars as guides
- explain the assessment process to parents or guardians, including the value of classroom assessments and how large-scale assessments of reading and writing (such as the province-wide assessments administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office) are used in school and classroom planning
- provide opportunities for professional dialogue about the developmental nature of reading and writing, and about practices that move students along the developmental continuum
- provide time and resources to support ongoing professional learning about literacy assessment and about the effective management and analysis of literacy assessment information

8 TALKING AND LISTENING

> "Language is our primary tool for organizing, thinking, developing memory, attending to and using information, and making connections (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985)."
>
> *(Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 254)*

Student talk is essential for literacy learning. It is through talk that students construct meaning from the texts they read and bring meaning to their writing. The goal of purposeful talk in the classroom is to enable students to negotiate meaning and to collaborate with others in order to clarify and deepen their understanding. To do this, students require a risk-free environment, one in which they can ask questions and share their opinions and personal points of view. Through careful listening and respectful dialogue, students build on the ideas of others and integrate new information into their world view.

KEY MESSAGES

- Talk is the foundation for literacy, and for thinking and learning at school and in life.
- Junior students need frequent, varied, and risk-free opportunities to think and talk about the things they are learning.
- Purposeful talk develops higher-order thinking skills. It helps students to make meaning, acquire new perspectives, and deepen their comprehension.
- Higher-level questioning encourages students to think more deeply about ideas and information.
- Junior students need explicit teaching and modelling of talk that facilitates learning in whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one situations.
- Student talk provides valuable information to help teachers assess a student's learning in all subject areas and plan what the student needs to learn next.

WHAT STUDENTS NEED

Reading
(and viewing)
Thinking
Writing (and
representing)
Making
Meaning
Thinking
Thinking
Talking
and Listening

Junior students need frequent opportunities to engage in academic and social talk for a variety of authentic purposes. Interacting with others allows students to hear what effective oral communication sounds like.

Purposeful talk helps students to engage with ideas and information in texts, clarify and deepen their understanding, extend their learning, and interact with peers. While sharing and shaping their own thinking, students also observe and absorb the thoughts and thinking processes of others. In this way, they revisit and extend their understandings and reshape their thinking to include new ideas, viewpoints, and knowledge. As they talk about texts, students have opportunities to explore the reading-writing connection. They make connections in three ways: text to self ("What does this message mean to me?"), text to text ("How does this relate to other messages?"), and text to world ("How does this influence my world view?").

SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH SCHOOLS

Second-language learners in English-language schools benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they are encouraged to talk, develop, and maintain proficiency in their first language while they are learning the language of instruction. Students can readily transfer their language skills and conceptual knowledge from one language to another, provided they have no learning needs that require special education support. A strong foundation in the first language can also help students develop mental flexibility, sharpen problem-solving skills, experience a sense of cultural stability and continuity, understand cultural and family values, develop awareness of global issues, and expand their future opportunities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 7).

The environment is different for children learning in the French-language school system. Depending on the community in which they live, they may have limited exposure to the French language outside the classroom. The school may be the only place where these children are exposed to French in a meaningful and consistent way. It becomes critical, then, that the school be a place steeped in French language and culture, and that language support programs be strong and readily available. To ensure that students in French-language schools receive the necessary depth of experience in French, it is essential that French-language schools be encouraged to use only French in all of their activities throughout the day.

Research indicates ...

- Most second-language learners achieve conversational fluency in their second language long before they fully develop the academic vocabulary needed to succeed in all subjects. It can take five to seven years for second-language learners to develop the academic vocabulary to think in the language of instruction and to fully understand and use the increasingly complex texts they encounter in many subjects. Translation software, electronic dictionaries, and other supports can help these students to keep pace with content knowledge while they develop their academic vocabulary (Cummins, 2000).
- "Authentic discussion, either led by the teacher or conducted between students, will generate and develop a sense of belonging to a community – one that welcomes all points of view and values difference over conformity" (Giasson, 2000, p. 33).
- The prospect of holding discussions with peers motivates students to become engaged with their reading. Discussing reading strategies with other students supports less autonomous readers (Hébert, 2002).

WHAT TEACHERS DO

Literacy-conscious teachers emphasize student talk in their lesson planning and make student talk a central feature in their classroom. Recognizing that talk is critical to learning, they plan questions that will promote lively discussions among students as well as with the teacher. In large-group discussions, they encourage student-to-student talk and ensure that there is a balance between student-centred and teacher-centred exchanges. They also plan for frequent small-group and paired activities that support "literacy talk" in the classroom.

The junior classroom is like an artisan's workshop. The teacher is the experienced reader and writer, and the students are novices learning in an apprentice-like relationship. Through expert demonstrations, modelling, thinking aloud, supporting, and scaffolding, the teacher conveys practical strategies and skills to the student. In this way, students develop new insight, knowledge, and skills for reading, writing, and thinking.

To help their students develop as **readers**, teachers model, facilitate, and support talk about the texts that students encounter. They ensure that their students listen to and interact with (that is, respond to, think critically about, and discuss) ideas, language, and processes. They think aloud and model their own reading processes and responses, providing students with practical strategies, vocabulary, and structures that the students can use to think and talk about texts.

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[illegible]

They provide scaffolded support, strategies and new directions to consider. Teachers build an understanding of the reciprocal nature of reading and writing.

To help their students develop as **writers**, teachers engage students in talk about the texts they read, noticing the writer's craft. They also focus on the writing process, *context, ideas, and language* of writing. They deliberately think aloud and talk about their own writing processes and strategies as they write, and make these visible and observable to students. They encourage students to ask questions and talk to each other about their written texts in order to extend their thinking and refine their writing.

To help their students develop as **thinkers**, teachers model a wide variety of open-ended questions that will elicit a range of responses. They prompt their students for inferences, connections, understanding, analysis, synthesis, and extended thinking. The goal is to encourage students to ask their own higher-order questions and to develop a critical stance in their thinking. They demonstrate how to elaborate their responses and how to back up the responses with evidence from texts and experience. They offer scaffolded support to engage students in interpreting, forming opinions, and asking questions about texts. They talk to students about their thinking and understanding, and reflect back to them the successful strategies, skills, and approaches the students are using. They also demonstrate how thinking aloud can help readers and writers to gather information, develop insights, make connections, solve problems, clear up confusion, and plan next steps.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING THROUGH DIALOGUE

Also see "Creating a Community of Learners" in section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

In the junior grades, many instructional approaches for reading and writing involve a dialogue among students and the teacher. Effective classroom dialogue is:

- **Collective:** Teachers and students address learning tasks together.
- **Reciprocal:** Teachers and students listen to each other, share ideas, and consider alternative viewpoints.
- **Cumulative:** Teachers and students build on their own and each other's ideas, and connect them.
- **Supportive:** Students articulate ideas without risk and help each other reach a common understanding.
- **Purposeful:** Teachers are clear about learning objectives and plan purposeful classroom talk.

(From the work of Dr. Robin Alexander, as described in Saunders, 2004, pp. 12–13)

Figure 11 identifies these five principles of effective dialogue, describes some of the benefits to students, and points out a few instructional approaches that promote dialogue in the junior classroom.

Figure 11. Five Principles of Effective Dialogue

Effective talk is …	Students learn to …	Teachers show how to …	Students benefit by …	Some classroom examples include …
COLLECTIVE	• become more confident in social situations • express thoughts and views • take part in conversations with peers and adults • sort out their ideas and firm up concepts	• practise active listening • focus and remember relevant information • talk effectively • extend their thinking to include new understandings and new points of view	• engaging with the ideas of others • building on the ideas of others • refining their thinking	• large-group discussions • literature circles • shared reading and writing
RECIPROCAL	• share and consider each other's and alternative points of view • interact with other learners • respect ground rules for listening to each other without interruption • focus on the speaker	• identify preferences • pose questions • retell details, events, and situations • facilitate discussion • formulate questions	• gaining confidence in their own thinking • developing skills to express their ideas • becoming better listeners • developing independent thinking skills	• sharing in pairs • peer conferencing • interviews
CUMULATIVE	• promote and extend classroom dialogue • demonstrate competence in thinking and oral skills • help each other to develop new ideas	• synthesize information • analyse information • detect point of view • ask critical questions	• considering multiple perspectives • collating and prioritizing information • using voice to convey meaning	• readers' theatre • small-group discussions • choral reading
SUPPORTIVE	• promote and extend classroom dialogue • demonstrate competence in thinking and in oral skills • help each other develop new ideas	• question • listen • support a partner • select a text to share	• gaining confidence • learning how to encourage others • thinking about their own thinking	• sharing in pairs • peer conferencing • paired reading and paired responses to texts • reading with a buddy
PURPOSEFUL	• understand the value of talk in clarifying their thinking • be accountable when talking in the teacher's absence • connect their learning to prior learning and the larger world	• stay on task • get back on track when the conversation gets off task • ask questions to encourage purposeful talk	• learning how to manage their time • learning how to respectfully accept or reject the ideas of others • learning how to create educative questions	• collaborative work • coming to consensus • literature circles • defending points of view with evidence from the text

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH TALK

Also see section 7, "Assessment".

Teachers use student talk to assess the student's development in reading and writing and the student's understanding of subject content. Through a variety of *instructional approaches, teachers listen for the student's ability to explain, retell,* summarize, synthesize, and reflect on texts of many types. Forms of talk that are suitable for assessing reading, writing, and subject knowledge include, for example, discussion groups, writer's circles, author's chair, student-teacher conferences, literature circles, pair work, three-way interviews, and book talks. These approaches provide the teacher with opportunities to give ongoing feedback and coaching that will help the student develop a deeper level of comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

In certain situations, the teacher may also use student talk to assess oral communication skills and may provide feedback to help the student develop oral skills. Forms of talk that are suitable for this purpose include oral presentations, storytelling, and debates.

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

Principals and school leaders support literacy learning in the junior grades when they:

- value purposeful student talk in the classroom;
- support oral language activities in the school;
- make connections to the oral culture of the community;
- help teachers understand that talk is essential to promote learning and higher-order thinking;
- provide opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning related to classroom dialogue and inquiry.

9

READING

> "In a very real sense, reading is power. Being a lifelong reader means you can use literacy to fulfill purposes in your life. It's a key to success."
>
> *(Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 368)*

Reading is an interactive, problem-solving process of making meaning from texts. In the junior grades, all students need explicit reading instruction and support as they encounter increasingly complex texts in all subject areas. To meet the full range of abilities, needs, interests, and learning styles of their students, teachers in the junior grades offer a rich and varied reading program, using a wide variety of instructional materials and strategies. To extend students' comprehension, teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to read and discuss a full range of texts. Students learn to monitor their progress as readers while teachers provide ongoing feedback. Success in reading encourages students to see themselves as readers and learners, and increases their motivation to read.

KEY MESSAGES

- Reading in the junior grades is an interactive, problem-solving process, with the primary purpose of making meaning.
- All junior students need to use higher-order thinking and critical-literacy skills to read and understand increasingly complex texts.
- Junior students need high-quality texts of appropriate complexity and variety, and many opportunities to read and talk about their reading.
- Both successful and struggling readers need rich reading experiences. Struggling readers should not be limited to low-level activities focused on decoding and literal comprehension.
- Reading begins with what the reader already knows. The reader's personal and cultural identity, first language, and other knowledge, experiences, and interests all contribute to the process of making meaning.

- Reading instruction is based on information about students' learning needs gathered by the teacher from a variety of assessments.
- Junior students need purposeful and explicit reading instruction to successfully read and to understand a range of text forms in a variety of subjects.
- Engagement with a wide range of text forms can help students see the texts all around them and recognize the many ways in which they read every day.

GETTING TO KNOW THE JUNIOR READER

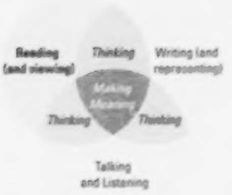
Before planning for reading instruction in the classroom, the teacher uses a variety of tools and strategies to determine what each student knows, can do, and needs for ongoing improvement along the learning continuum. The teacher gathers information related to the students' reading interests, preferences, and experiences using interest inventories, conferences, and conversations. The teacher observes the student reading to see the student's skills, strategies, and processes in action and to note the strengths and needs of each student in order to plan for differentiated classroom instruction. Observation tools may include records of reading behaviour, oral summaries, and reading conference notes.

When teachers have a deep awareness of their students' needs as readers, they can select the most appropriate texts for instructional purposes and target their instruction to meet specific needs. To engage the interest of their students and to build on prior knowledge and experience, teachers ensure that the reading program respectfully addresses how students see themselves, individually and as part of a culture, and ensure that texts include viewpoints that reflect the diverse nature of Canadian society and the wider global community.

Research indicates ...

Students who are motivated to read will read more, and this exposure to more texts increases comprehension (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999).

WHAT JUNIOR READERS DO



As students enter the junior grades, they bring a variety of reading experiences, skills, and strategies that provide a foundation for ongoing learning. They use this foundation to gain greater control of the reading process as they read increasingly complex materials in a variety of media. To make meaning from texts, they learn to apply strategies and skills such as determining the purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge, using cueing systems and comprehension strategies, and analysing the meaning in order to acquire a deeper level of understanding. Reading for meaning is not a linear process; it often requires the reader to go back and rethink.

To help junior students clarify their understanding of texts, teachers encourage them to talk about their reading and to explore how reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking all work together to help make meaning in the human mind. Together they examine how the writer's craft – including word choice, text form, media, images, metaphors, and a range of other considerations – helps or hinders the reader in making meaning and in drawing conclusions from the text. They evaluate the texts they read in order to become more discerning readers and more effective writers.

Evidence for the Reading-Writing Connection

"Children who write become better readers. One of the most powerful connections you can make is through reading and writing (Spivey, 1997). Children who read something knowing that they will have to write something are more likely to read with a clear sense of purpose. Children who use information from their reading to write produce better writing because they have more to say. Research has shown a clear benefit from connecting reading and writing (Shanahan, 1988). It has also shown that a writing program that includes instruction in specific informational text structures improves both writing and reading comprehension (Raphael, Kirschner, & Englert, 1988)."

(Allington & Cunningham, 2002, p. 125)

Four Roles of the Developing Junior Reader

Figure 12 describes some of the ways in which junior readers develop their capacity for making meaning of texts, breaking the code of texts, using texts functionally, and analysing texts. All students, both successful readers and those who are struggling, need rich reading experiences that help them develop higher-order thinking skills and build their confidence in each of the four roles. Struggling readers should not be limited to low-level activities that focus only on code breaking and literal comprehension.

Also see "Four Roles of a Literate Learner" in section 2, "Literacy for the Twenty-first Century".

Figure 12. Four Roles of the Developing Junior Reader

The Developing Junior Reader

Meaning Maker

- Recognizes that reading always involves a search for meaning
- Knows and applies a variety of comprehension strategies
- Self-monitors while reading, recognizing when comprehension breaks down and taking steps to restore it
- Sustains comprehension and maintains interest over extended periods of time
- Demonstrates a continuous awareness of one's own reading strategies and processes
- Responds to texts in a variety of ways

Code Breaker

- Draws on a repertoire of known words
- Continuously develops a reading vocabulary that allows access into a variety of texts
- Uses word-solving strategies
- Uses language conventions (e.g., punctuation) and text features to aid comprehension
- Recognizes and uses visual information to aid comprehension

Text User

- Selects texts and reading for a variety of purposes
- Knows and uses the structures and features of a variety of text forms to aid comprehension
- Adjusts reading strategies and reading rate to match the text form and the purpose of reading
- Recognizes the author's voice in a text
- Thinks metacognitively to make meaning

Text Analyser

- Applies higher-order thinking skills to deepen understanding and to deconstruct the author's message
- Analyses ideas, information, and perspectives in texts
- Engages in critical literacy/inquiry
- Recognizes points of view, omissions, and multiple perspectives

(Based on Freebody & Luke's "four resources model", 1990, and Figure 2, p. 9 of this report. The panel has further elaborated on the four resources model to suggest four roles of a developing junior reader.)

Using Metacognition

Reading is a multi-layered thinking process. Metacognition – the process of thinking about one's own thought processes – provides readers with a way to make their thinking explicit as they read. It is one form of higher-order thinking. Good readers plan and monitor their reading at a metacognitive level. Metacognition is especially important in the junior grades as readers deal with more complex texts and think about the comprehension strategies they need to make sense of those texts. When they run into difficulty, they evaluate their reading to determine the best strategy to use to improve their understanding.

Teachers play an important role in modelling how to think metacognitively to help students figure out what they know and what they need to know. Teachers can use strategies such as think-alouds to model their own thought processes and to provide students with the scaffolding they need to understand that readers plan consciously in order to make sense of texts.

Using Cueing Systems

All texts provide cues to help the reader understand what the author wants to communicate. Learning to draw consciously on these cues helps junior readers make meaning from increasingly complex texts. Following are four cueing systems that effective readers use to make meaning of texts:

- *Semantics* refers to meaning in language, including the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, alone and in context.
- *Syntax* refers to the generally accepted ways words in a language are combined to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax includes classes of words (such as noun, verb, and adjective) and their functions (such as subject and object).
- *Graphophonics* refers to the relationships between the symbols and sounds of a language, as well as visual information on the page that helps readers to decode text. Graphophonic cues occur within words and may include letter or sound relationships, word patterns, and words recognized by sight.
- *Pragmatics* is the study of how people choose what they say or write from the range of possibilities available in the language, and how listeners or readers are affected by those choices. Pragmatics involves understanding how the context influences the way sentences convey information.

COMPREHENSION

All reading is a search for meaning: the essential purpose of reading is comprehension. The meaning that readers seek is both in the text and in the mind of the reader who brings experiences, knowledge, purposes, and a perspective to the author's words and meanings.

Reading comprehension involves uncovering the layers of meaning that may reside in the minds of both the reader and the author in order to "create" meaning from, and reach a deeper level of understanding of, texts. Comprehension is a higher-order thinking activity in which readers use a number of mental processes and strategies to consider the big ideas in a text and to fulfil the many purposes of reading, which may include gathering information, enjoying stories, interacting with ideas, expanding knowledge, and acquiring new insights. Students are encouraged to "engage in an effective set of thought processes at strategic points in the text so that interaction releases a deep, fulfilling, and personally valuable understanding of a print or technologically driven text" (Block & Pressley, 2002, p. 43).

Research indicates ...

Successful comprehension instruction involves four components: large amounts of time for actual reading; teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies; opportunities for peer and collaborative learning; and occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading (Fielding & Pearson, 1994).

Students develop their comprehension skills through effective instruction and extensive reading. When students have frequent opportunities to talk about their reading and to compare their understandings, they further develop the ideas and information that they have drawn from their reading. Students experience the full benefits of reading when they can respond to, reflect on, and make connections between what they read and what they already feel and know, and when they can find new ideas, questions, and information in their reading. Deep comprehension enables students to acquire new perspectives and new interests from texts, and to make new connections with the human condition and the world beyond the classroom. Students also respond to texts in deeply personal ways, making connections that enrich their understanding and support their growing sense of self and social identity. Each act of reading brings a new set of experiences that add to the students' cognitive and emotional development and that will enrich their comprehension of both the texts they are reading now and those they will read in the future.

Responding to Texts

Teachers help students to explain and describe their responses to texts by first modelling their own response and then ensuring that students have frequent opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings through discussion, art, drama, and written/visual forms. The unique response of each student provides a "window" into the student's reading process, as well as his or her comprehension and thinking processes. The multiple meanings, responses, and interpretations that students give to a text enrich classroom literacy and allow students to acquire new insights, ideas, and perspectives that add to their own comprehension.

In the junior grades, students' inquiry and reasoning processes continue to develop as teachers guide and instruct students towards increasingly higher levels of comprehension by modelling and scaffolding instruction in ways that help students explore the texts they read to discover ever-more-subtle and complex meanings.

Research indicates ...

Readers who know and understand how different texts are structured use this knowledge to aid comprehension (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000).

Developing Critical-Literacy Skills

A critical-literacy lens can be used to extend the comprehension of junior students. Readers can acquire deeper insight into texts by investigating how authors use language, layout, and graphics, or omit or include certain perspectives to try to influence what a reader takes from a text. For example:

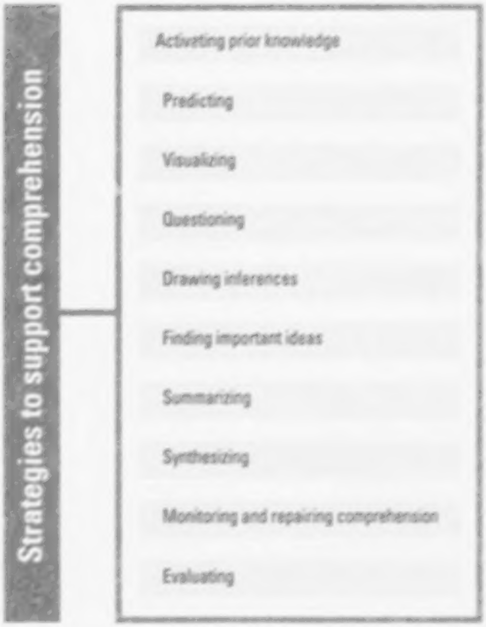
Also see "Developing Critical-Literacy Skills" in section 2, "Literacy for the Twenty-first Century".

- In Grade 4, students could evaluate the influence of fast-food advertisements in a variety of media. They could look at how text form is related to message, and analyse the techniques used by advertisers to communicate their message.
- In Grade 5, students could investigate the relationship among plot, character, and gender in a novel. A discussion could focus on the question, "If the main character had been female, how could the story have been told differently?"
- In Grade 6, students could examine a social studies text on explorers. They could compare the description of Cartier in the text to a short story that focuses on the impact of early European settlement on Aboriginal peoples.

> "Without question, analysis and criticism play an important role in modern society. A collective gain comes from a literate citizenry composed of competent readers who also think critically about what they read. Being a 'critical' citizen means questioning what one hears and reads and evaluating those texts for accuracy. It means evaluating political decisions for the impact on people and the environment."
>
> *(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 368)*

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSION

Figure 13. Strategies to Support Comprehension


Strategies to support comprehension
Activating prior knowledge
Predicting
Visualizing
Questioning
Drawing inferences
Finding important ideas
Summarizing
Synthesizing
Monitoring and repairing comprehension
Evaluating

Effective readers and writers use a range of strategies in a variety of combinations when interacting with text. They do not use strategies in isolation. Figure 13 shows some of the key strategies that junior readers use in combination to make meaning from texts.

Activating Prior Knowledge

Teachers use a variety of methods to show students how to begin the process of reading. They demonstrate by modelling the questions all good readers ask themselves as they approach a new text:

- What do I already know about this topic?
- What have I read that seems similar to this text?
- What else does this remind me of?

Questions like these prompt the reader to draw on previous knowledge and experiences to gain entry into the meaning of the text. Through questioning, discussing, and brainstorming, students discover common ground and diverse

Research indicates ...

- Strategic readers have better reading comprehension. Through strategy instruction (also called *transactional strategies instruction*), students learn to become more strategic readers. Teachers explain and demonstrate the use of strategies, and then students apply the strategies with guidance and support from the teacher. Transactional strategies instruction was found to be effective with students in Grades 5 and 6 (Collins, 1991). It should be part of a long-term approach to comprehension instruction (Pressley, 2000).
- Strategies should not be used singly. For example, good readers do not rely on prediction alone to help them understand a book; they use multiple strategies. The use of strategies depends on context and situation. Students learn to coordinate their repertoire of comprehension strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002).
- "A strategic reader coordinates a set of strategies flexibly and changes the way the strategies are applied when necessary" (Giasson, 2000, p. 92).

perspectives that stimulate their interest in reading and provide them with incentive to read. They also establish a foundation for approaching new and unfamiliar material upon which they can build and which will enhance their enjoyment of and interest in reading.

Predicting

Through prediction, students bring their personal experiences, prior knowledge, and worldview to the text, both before and during reading. They may begin by considering the title, cover, key words, and a partial reading of the whole text, and then use reasoning and inquiry to predict what will come next. Prediction enables students to set and revise their assumptions about the text as they actively look for what they think will happen or, if their predictions are wrong, as they are surprised by new ideas or information that engage their interest and cause them to reconsider. Prediction involves students in combining details and impressions, making inferences, and coordinating information and ideas drawn from the text and from the way in which the text is presented.

Teachers think aloud in order to model the process of prediction, using examples from fiction and informational texts in various genres and media.

Visualizing

Effective readers use the words, structures, and meanings in a text to create pictures in their minds. In this way, they give concrete form to abstract ideas or information, and they use these mental pictures to extend and deepen their comprehension. Junior students need explicit examples and modelling from the teacher and many opportunities to engage in developing and discussing the visual images they use. All students, including those who may not have developed the process of imaging or imagining, need opportunities to bring their images to a conscious level where they can compare, describe, and elaborate on them with the teacher and other readers. Mental imaging is useful for both fiction and informational texts. It may take the form of pictures, mind maps, or graphics that help to organize and explain the concepts in texts.

Questioning

Questioning during reading helps to move the reading process forward. The overriding question "Does this make sense to me?" is a driving force that helps students actively monitor their comprehension. At deeper levels, questions such as "Why?", "What next?", "What for?", or "What does this mean?" keep students engaged in the search for new understanding as they read. Teachers make these questions explicit when they model their own reading process, helping students acquire insight into the mental activity that lies beneath the surface of effective reading. These questions also emerge in discussions

Also see "Developing Higher-Order Thinking" in section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

during and after reading, and may be expressed as "I wonder if ...?" or "How do you think ...?" Although students' answers to these questions will often be tentative, the discussion will help them understand that reading is a process of ongoing inquiry, rather than a search for firm answers or absolute conclusions.

Students may begin their reading by asking questions about the content, topic, or ideas and, in this way, establish purposes that will bring focus to their reading.

Drawing Inferences

Drawing inferences while reading is a sophisticated thinking process that requires readers to use both the stated and implied messages in a text to reach a new and deep understanding of the text. Inference requires students to combine cues and nuances in the text to generate conclusions or hypotheses. Teachers demonstrate inference-making when they think aloud as they read and engage students in discussion about the possible meanings in the text. For example, they could discuss the actions of a character and make inferences about what the character is feeling, or they could examine a description of a machine to infer the machine's history or purpose. In this way, students are taught to systematically think about what the author implies, but does not state directly, in the text.

Finding Important Ideas

Readers are called upon to find out what the author is emphasizing in a text and to determine the most important ideas on the basis of clues in the language and the details provided. Students learn how to question as they read in order to sort out key ideas. Teachers demonstrate and model the reasoning required to recognize the most important messages in a text by combining the smaller ideas and details. Because key ideas are implied rather than stated, junior students need a great deal of discussion and scaffolding to develop the ability to read between the lines of a text in order to discover what the author wants the reader to think or understand.

Summarizing

In summarizing a text, students are asked to apply a number of thinking processes in order to combine meanings, delete less important details, and condense the key messages to arrive at the essence of meaning. Junior students need a great deal of practice with the help of teacher modelling and guidance before they are able to apply these processes independently. Oral and visual summaries, concept maps, and frequent discussions with the teacher and other students enable junior learners to develop the skills and processes they need to summarize meaning in their reading.

Synthesizing

Synthesizing requires students to combine ideas or information from more than one source or point of view. Teachers show students how to gather meanings from several texts and genres to create a larger or more complete picture of a topic. For example, a teacher could demonstrate how to use information from a novel, a magazine article, and a social studies text to synthesize details of pioneer life in Canada. Teachers help students to develop the skills they need to synthesize and integrate ideas and information by frequently modelling the processes and by providing time for students to read, think about, and talk about many texts in a variety of genres and subject areas.

Monitoring and Revising Comprehension

Effective readers interrupt their reading when they lose the meaning. They then seek out and apply "fix-it" strategies that restore meaning and enable them to continue. Students may reread to confirm, clarify, or summarize what has been read, or to deepen their comprehension of a text. They may seek further information from the teacher, their peers, or other resources. When comprehension is difficult, they may visualize the ideas or slow down their reading. All students need explicit instruction in how to monitor and restore comprehension when reading, especially with longer or more complex texts. Less successful readers may need to develop an awareness of comprehension processes used in reading in order to realize that all readers "get stuck" or encounter obstacles in their reading. With the assistance of direct instruction, modelling, and scaffolding by the teacher, students can learn to apply appropriate strategies to aid comprehension.

Evaluating

Deep comprehension goes beyond determining the author's message to making judgements based on a thoughtful analysis of the text. When reading print, visual, or electronic texts, students need to learn how to examine the messages they read, looking for inconsistencies and evidence of the author's beliefs, values, and point of view. When teachers raise questions about an author's purpose, perspective, or attempts to influence readers, they help students to develop skills of discernment. When students reflect on what the author wants the reader to think or believe, or how the author is persuading the reader to feel a particular way, they learn to evaluate what they read, view, and hear, and to draw conclusions about the purpose and validity of the ideas and information in texts of all types.

WORD KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSION

In order to maintain a high level of comprehension when reading lengthy or complex texts, students need to build a rich and diverse vocabulary, use word-solving strategies while reading, develop an awareness of word choice and language usage in text, and read with fluency.

Vocabulary building occurs informally through reading and classroom discussions, and more formally through mini-lessons. Vocabulary instruction can take place in all subject areas. Students need opportunities to work with new vocabulary before and after encountering it in challenging texts, and they need repeated exposure to newly learned vocabulary in independent reading in order to embed the meanings of the words in their memory. Instruction should show students how to make meaning using word webs, word sorts, concept maps, and other graphic organizers.

Helping Second-Language Learners Develop an Academic Vocabulary

Second-language learners need significant support, time, and meaningful practice to develop the necessary vocabulary to read and understand the academic language in the texts they encounter in school. They need opportunities to use their growing vocabulary in authentic ways. Through independent reading and teacher read-alouds in the language of instruction, second-language learners improve their comprehension, vocabulary, and learning (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 1998).

Research indicates ...

- Students who read large amounts of text will learn new words and develop a larger vocabulary through incidental learning (Giasson, 1990; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985b; Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987).
- Insufficient familiarity with vocabulary is one of the main sources of difficulty in comprehending (Observatoire national de la lecture, 2000).
- There is a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension (Baker, Simmons, & Kameenuim, 1995; Nagy, 1988).
- Vocabulary growth is influenced by the amount and frequency of reading that children do (Giasson, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Word-solving strategies equip students with the ability to see the patterns in words and to guess the meaning of new words from recognizable fragments, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Students become problem solvers who look for spelling patterns, form hypotheses, predict outcomes, and test them, using what they already know about words to build new knowledge (Scott & Siamon, 2004). They need opportunities to explore, sort, and manipulate word patterns, and they may need prompts to help them solve new or difficult words (e.g., "What parts of the word do you know?").

Word solving is not an isolated exercise; the strategies become truly meaningful and memorable when students apply them in real reading situations.

An awareness of the author's **word choice and language usage** helps students explore texts more deeply. By exploring the author's use of metaphors, descriptive language, and idiom, students acquire insight into the author's intent and develop other comprehension strategies, such as visualization and inference.

Fluency involves the ability to read texts quickly and automatically and to maintain a comfortable momentum through longer texts. Fluency alone does not guarantee comprehension, but it is an essential condition for deep comprehension. Without a store or "bank" of words that can be read quickly and automatically, students' working memories focus on decoding, leaving them with little of the energy needed to concentrate on making sense of the text. Students need a bank of words that come to mind automatically, requiring no conscious effort, in order to manage difficult decoding and comprehension challenges. Automaticity is best developed when students read and re-read easy, familiar texts at their independent reading level (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985b; Beers, 2003).

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

Students learn effective reading strategies by observing as the teacher models the strategies and then applying the strategies. The goal is to equip the student to read independently. Teachers use a range of approaches to engage students in higher-order thinking before, during, and after reading in order to deepen their comprehension skills and develop their critical-literacy skills. For example:

Also see section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

- **Before reading**, teachers help students to activate their prior knowledge and experiences by having them brainstorm and categorize ideas on the topic, predict what will happen in the text, and skim or preview the text.
- **During reading**, teachers help students to comprehend the text by having them make personal connections with the text, visualize ideas, identify confusing parts, monitor their understanding, recall information, and use context clues.
- **After reading**, students reflect on the text in order to expand their prior knowledge, deepen their understanding of and engagement with the text, and make connections to other texts through strategies such as rereading, questioning, and summarizing.

Teachers use a variety of approaches to provide explicit instruction and to give students the opportunity to practise their skills. Some examples include read-alouds, shared reading, drama/reader's theatre, guided reading, literature circles/book clubs, and independent or self-selected reading. Before choosing an instructional approach, the teacher

Figure 14. Instructional Approaches for Reading

	Instructional approach		
	Read-alouds	**Shared reading**	**Drama/Reader's theatre**
	The teacher reads a text (picture book, novel, magazine article, information text) aloud to the whole group. The teacher may stop to think aloud or use other modelling strategies. Opportunities to orally "debrief" students and to deconstruct the text may follow.	The teacher presents a text on an overhead, chart, or in big-book format to the whole class or a small group. The class or group reads the text together. The text can be read chorally, silently, or by student volunteers. The teacher uses the text to demonstrate one or more teaching points.	Using a variety of dramatic responses, students can both deepen and demonstrate their understanding of a text. Strategies such as role play and tableaux allow students to express their understandings both orally and physically. Reader's theatre is an excellent vehicle for rehearsing and improving fluent reading.
Teaching point	**For example ...**	**For example ...**	**For example ...**
Metacognition	The teacher models the use of self-monitoring strategies (e.g., rereading to maintain meaning).	The teacher thinks aloud to demonstrate the use of context clues to predict the meaning of words.	Students confer with one another, using a self-assessment checklist, before making an oral presentation.
Comprehension	The teacher models the use of a comprehension strategy (e.g., thinking aloud while visualizing the setting).	The teacher thinks aloud to demonstrate the process of determining the important ideas, using the shared text.	The teacher uses tableaux, where the students create a still picture using their bodies, to practise visualization strategies.
Critical literacy	The teacher leads a discussion with a group of students about the author's depiction of male and female characters.	The group reads a short, persuasive shared text together and discusses the author's point of view.	A teacher and a student model an in-role conversation between two authors with opposing viewpoints.
Pragmatics		The group examines and discusses the structure of a shared procedural text.	
Fluency	The teacher models expressive, fluent reading.		Students rehearse and present a reader's theatre, demonstrating fluent reading.
Vocabulary building			
Word solving			

LEVEL OF SUPPORT **High support** **... gradual release of responsibility ...**

Instructional approach			
Guided reading	**Literature circles/Book clubs**	**Independent or self-selected reading**	
Students in a small group read a book selected by the teacher to provide a moderate challenge, and, while reading, they use previously taught strategies and skills to construct meaning. The teacher coaches and prompts the students in effective reading strategies, supports vocabulary learning, and models questioning to promote higher-order thinking and critical literacy. The small-group structure gives the teacher opportunities to meet individual needs.	Students are gathered into flexible, dynamic groupings to discuss texts they are reading or have read. These circles offer students opportunities to discuss books and develop reflective practices. They also offer students opportunities to choose books, describe personal responses, and discuss features of texts. In addition, students learn social skills as they share leadership, responsibilities, and experiences in a community of learners.	Students select their own books and independently practise the skills and strategies introduced in large- and small-group instruction. Students are encouraged to select books of personal interest at an easy or instructional level. To build a community of readers, teachers may also provide opportunities for students to share their reading and their responses to the texts with their classmates.	
For example ...	**For example ...**	**For example ...**	**Teaching point**
		After reading a challenging text, individual students reflect on the strategies they used to sustain meaning.	Metacognition
During reading, the teacher coaches individual students on the use of visualization to imagine the setting of the story.	During reading, the teacher confers with small groups to coach them in the use of questioning strategies.	After reading, students make text-to-self and text-to-text connections, and record their thinking on a graphic organizer.	Comprehension
During reading, students search for words that the author has used to create a negative image of a group of people.	During reading, small groups compare and contrast the different points of view of two authors about environmental issues.	After reading independently, students work with a partner to compare the language used by authors in their respective texts to describe children. They draw conclusions about the author's point of view on the basis of evidence in the text.	Critical literacy
	After reading a mystery novel, students complete a story grammar to demonstrate their understanding of the text structure.		Pragmatics
After reading, the group discusses the author's use of bolding and exclamation marks, and rereads a selected section to practise intonation and emphasis.			Fluency
Before reading a new selection, students identify, sort, and classify challenging vocabulary from the text.			Vocabulary building
	During reading, students collect challenging words and use a graphic organizer to guide their use of word-solving strategies.		Word solving

... gradual release of responsibility ...

Low support

carefully considers what strategies and skills the students need to learn (the teaching point) and the level of support they require. For example, the teaching point could involve modelling or practising the strategies involved in metacognition, comprehension, critical literacy, pragmatics, fluency, vocabulary building, and word solving – or several of these in combination. Teachers begin by demonstrating the strategies through modelling and/or think-alouds, then move into coaching or guiding, and eventually arrive at a point where their students practise the skill or strategy independently.

Figure 14 highlights a few of the instructional approaches teachers could use to help their students acquire specific reading skills and strategies and develop growing independence as they read texts of many types in print and electronic forms. The examples do not provide an exhaustive list, but only a few ideas to illustrate how certain instructional approaches can be used to make or support a teaching point.

ASSESSING STUDENT READING

Also see section 7, "Assessment".

Ongoing and multifaceted assessment of reading attitudes, skills, and comprehension levels ensures that all junior learners receive a program that helps them to become independent readers. Assessment information allows the teacher to make informed and purposeful decisions. Teachers need to assess their students' attitudes to reading as well as their reading achievement levels in order to plan effective instruction.

In the junior grades, students become more actively involved in setting goals for their reading development, in monitoring their progress, and in becoming reflective participants in their learning.

Teachers gather assessment information from a variety of sources, using a range of assessment strategies, in order to determine the reader's skills, strategies, and comprehension levels, provide timely feedback, and plan targeted instruction. Text samples used for assessment purposes include cross-curricular examples of fiction and informational texts in a range of print and electronic media.

Following are a few examples of the many sources of information teachers use to assess reading attitudes and achievement:

- **Attitude and interest surveys:** Students describe their attitudes to reading and how they see themselves as readers, and identify topics and texts of interest. Teachers use this information to select appropriate and engaging reading material and to plan instruction.
- **Teacher's observations:** The teacher observes a student reading and responding to texts in the roles of meaning maker, code breaker, text user, and text analyst. The teacher may choose to record anecdotal remarks or use checklists to guide the observations and to focus on specific reading behaviours and/or skills. This information informs the teacher about student needs and programming priorities.

- **Retellings:** Students synthesize the text and retell it so that the teacher can monitor their comprehension of it.
- **Self-evaluations:** Students articulate their own progress towards the achievement of their reading goals. The teacher uses this information to determine a student's perceptions of his or her own reading, to help the student take ownership of reading goals, and to help the student develop the habit of reflective learning (e.g., "What have I done?", "What can I do to improve?", "How can I use what I have learned?").
- **Records of reading behaviour** (such as miscue analyses): The teacher observes a student reading in order to assess how the student uses the cueing systems in combination to make meaning from texts.
- **Performance tasks:** Students apply what they have learned as readers in new contexts that involve using texts for specific and complex purposes. The teacher observes how students apply the learning, and looks for evidence of higher-order thinking.

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

To encourage a focus on literacy and to promote high reading achievement levels in the junior grades, principals and school leaders do the following:

- demonstrate their commitment to reading by sharing favourite poems, thought-provoking newspaper articles, and e-mail correspondence with individual students, groups of students (e.g., a book club), and the student body
- invite members of the community to share their histories, reading habits, and preferences as readers, in order to model adult reading behaviours for students (Szymusiak & Sibberson, 2001)
- support teachers in understanding that reading responses at the junior level take many valid forms, which may or may not include written text (e.g., a multimedia presentation on the health effects of smoking)
- communicate with parents about how to support their children in reading at home – for example, by talking together about texts, helping children select appropriate texts for independent reading, and doing shared-reading activities with children

For many other ways in which the principal and school leaders support reading in the junior grades, see "What Principals and School Leaders Do" in sections 6, 7, 8, and 12.

10 WRITING

"When engaged in writing tasks for real purposes related to authentic personal experiences, students learn the power and importance of written language. They gain a writer's voice. Students learn that 'Writing begins not as deskwork but as lifework.'"

(Calkins, 1994, p. 24)

"Writing is a means of learning, a way of 'thinking on paper'. By writing, students can gather and revise their ideas; they can express their responses."

(Giasson, 2000, p. 131)

Writing, in the junior grades, provides students with powerful opportunities to learn about themselves and their connections to the world. Through writing, students organize their thoughts, remember important information, solve problems, reflect on a widening range of perspectives, and learn how to communicate effectively for specific purposes and audiences. They find their voice and have opportunities to explore other voices. By putting their thoughts into words and supporting the words with visual images in a range of media, students acquire knowledge and deepen their understanding of the content in all school subjects. Writing also helps students to better understand their own thoughts and feelings and the events in their lives.

KEY MESSAGES

- Writing provides students with opportunities to explore topics that are important to them and to develop a voice for expressing their ideas, feelings, and points of view.
- Writing helps students to develop higher-order thinking and critical-literacy skills, to solve problems, and to consolidate their learning in all subjects.
- Junior students begin to gain control of a greater variety of writing forms and use them for different purposes in all subjects.
- Students need support and timely feedback to develop as independent writers.
- The recursive writing process helps students to approach each writing task in manageable stages in order to produce texts that reach their target audience and achieve their purpose.

- To refine their writing skills, students need to write regularly for a variety of purposes in a range of subjects, and they also need timely feedback from their readers, including their teachers and peers.

GETTING TO KNOW THE JUNIOR WRITER

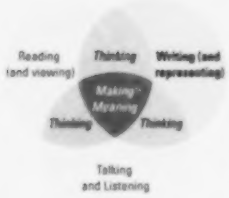
Real-world writing experiences build morale, spread energy, help students accomplish real goals, and provide opportunities for writers to be excellent (Harwayne, 2000).

Writing "a real letter to request funding or permission is not the same as writing a fictitious letter as an exercise."

(Perrenoud, 1997b, p. 68)

All students can become motivated writers when they are offered choices and opportunities to write on topics and in text forms that interest them, and when they receive encouragement and scaffolded support. The motivation to write grows as students develop a writer's identity and gain confidence in their writing. Teachers need to meet junior writers at their current stage of development and guide them along a developmental continuum towards independent writing. To do this, they must carefully assess the needs, interests, experiences, and personal and cultural identity of each student, and plan appropriate instruction, practice, and feedback. Assessment tools include samples of the student's writing, interviews and conferences, and observations of the student at work. Students need to read their work out loud and to reflect on their writing in order to grow as writers. Time for conferring and sharing their work with the teacher and their peers is critical.

WHAT JUNIOR WRITERS DO



Writers write to create, to record, and to communicate ideas for themselves and others. They use texts to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to challenge, and to provoke their readers. Students who consciously think about their reasons for writing, and about the writing process, become more effective and more motivated writers.

Teachers encourage junior students to talk about their writing and to explore how reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking interact to help make meaning in the human mind. Together teacher and students examine how students will use the writing process and the writer's craft – including word choice, text form, medium or media, images, and a range of other considerations – to meet their reader's needs. Teachers use texts that students have read as models for effective writing. As junior students move more deeply into using the writing process, they apply knowledge acquired through reading to get their brains ready to write.

> "The real question for writing teachers is, how do we help our students develop a repertoire of approaches to writing that are comparable to reading strategies .... How do we help writers identify problems, solve them, take charge of their writing and thinking."
>
> *(Atwell, 2003, p. xvi)*

Four Roles of the Developing Junior Writer

In the junior grades, students continue to learn to approach texts from different angles and to apply strategies and skills that will help their readers make meaning from the texts the students create. Developing junior writers become increasingly adept at using information and imagination to create texts in a variety of media for a variety of purposes. (See Figure 15.)

Also see "Four Roles of a Literate Learner" in section 2, "Literacy for the Twenty-first Century".

Figure 15. Four Roles of the Developing Junior Writer

The Developing Junior Reader

Meaning Maker

- Recognizes that the purpose of writing is to clearly communicate a specific message to the reader
- Strives to select vocabulary and language structures that will best convey the message
- Revises to clarify meaning and to enhance word choice
- Makes connections between reading and writing
- Uses the writing process to clarify thinking

Code Breaker

- Uses a variety of strategies to build new writing vocabulary
- Knows and attends to writing conventions
- Uses anchor charts, dictionaries, and other support materials to draft and edit texts

Text User

- Recognizes and understands the structures of a variety of text forms
- Writes for a variety of purposes (e.g., to clarify, to persuade, to report)
- Matches the text form to the audience and to the purpose for writing
- Effectively uses the language features and conventions of a variety of text forms
- Writes with an author's voice

Text Analyser

- Analyses and deconstructs texts to understand the writer's craft
- Writes to respond thoughtfully and sometimes critically to personally relevant issues or concerns
- Uses written texts to express a perspective or point of view
- Revises and edits writing with attention to the clarity and persuasiveness of the message

(Based on Freebody & Luke's "four resources model", 1990, and Figure 2, p. 9 of this report. The panel has further elaborated on the four resources model to suggest four roles of a developing junior writer.)

> "The real question for writing teachers is, how do we help our students develop a repertoire of approaches to writing that are comparable to reading strategies .... How do we help writers identify problems, solve them, take charge of their writing and thinking."
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The Developing
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- Matches the text form to the audience and to the purpose for writing
- Effectively uses the language features and conventions of a variety of text forms
- Writes with an author's voice

Text Analyser

- Analyses and deconstructs texts to understand the writer's craft
- Writes to respond thoughtfully and sometimes critically to personally relevant issues or concerns
- Uses written texts to express a perspective or point of view
- Revises and edits writing with attention to the clarity and persuasiveness of the message

(Based on Freebody & Luke's "four resources model", 1990, and Figure 2, p. 9 of this report. The panel has further elaborated on the four resources model to suggest four roles of a developing junior writer.)

Using Metacognition

Good writers plan and monitor their writing at a metacognitive level. Applying metacognitive skills to writing becomes especially powerful in the junior grades as students work with a greater variety of text forms in increasingly complex print and electronic media, and as they begin to use writing as a means to clarify their thinking. Teachers provide explicit instruction that helps students think about their writing process and refine their writing to serve specific purposes and audiences. Teachers encourage questioning and inquiry to activate students' higher-order thinking before and during writing. They also guide students to reflect on their written work and on the writing process.

Research indicates ...

Metacognitive knowledge is important for self-regulated writing. Good writers have an understanding of the writing process, text structure, and genre. Writers use this knowledge on two levels: they look for organizational patterns that bind their ideas into clusters; and they make decisions about how to combine these clusters of ideas into meaningful texts (Englert, Raphael, & Anderson, 1992).

Using Different Text Forms

The term *text form* refers to a category or type of text that has certain defining characteristics. Texts can be categorized in many different ways – for example, according to the subject, style, or presentation of ideas. Examples of literary text forms include poetry, historical fiction, mystery, biography, satire, and science fiction. (These are also referred to as *genres*.) Examples of informational text forms include summaries, recounts, lab reports, procedures, and jot notes. Another way texts could be categorized is by their graphical features (e.g., picture books, which can be fiction or informational texts) or by their medium (e.g., print or electronic). There is no single defining list of text forms that teachers can memorize and share with their students. The concept of text forms is simply useful as a way for readers and writers to think about the purpose of a text and its intended audience. When writing, students think about their purpose and their audience, and then draw on their knowledge of the text forms that, as readers, they have seen used effectively for this kind of purpose and audience. Using that knowledge, they choose a text form that will allow them to convey their message successfully.

Using the writing process as a framework, teachers engage their students in thinking about the reasons for writing – for example, to retell, to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to reflect, to record. They provide students with frequent opportunities to write in a variety of different text forms for a range of purposes and audiences, and they guide students to choose a text form that serves the purpose and audience for a particular writing task.

When junior students are immersed in a wide variety of text forms through shared, guided, and independent reading and viewing, they have opportunities to examine the craft of effective writers. As they analyse and deconstruct texts, they deepen their understanding of text structures and of the writer's craft. Students need to be aware of many different text forms if they are to compose with increasing independence for a variety of purposes across subject areas.

Developing the Writer's Craft

As important as it is to write often for meaningful purposes, writing in itself will not make students into better writers. In order to become effective at the craft of writing, students need to observe experienced writers as they engage in the writing process and as they think aloud about their writing. To meet the needs of student writers at different phases of development, teachers offer instruction in a "writer's workshop" format that provides students with opportunities to see and apply the writer's craft and to follow the writing process. They offer mini-lessons that focus on specific aspects of a text form in order to deepen students' understanding of the writer's craft (Graves, 1994; Routman, 1996; Calkins, 1994). They also engage students in critically analysing texts of many types, exploring how authors use the writer's craft to influence their readers, and reflecting on how they could use similar or different techniques in their own writing.

Developing a Writer's Ethic

Students need explicit instruction in order to learn how to use information responsibly in their own writing – for example, choosing reliable sources, avoiding plagiarism, and citing sources. Without guidance, junior students could quite innocently violate copyright, since they cannot be expected to know what copyright means and why it matters. Information technology makes it easier to copy sources today than in the past, and so it is more important than ever to instil ethical habits in young writers.

THE RECURSIVE WRITING PROCESS

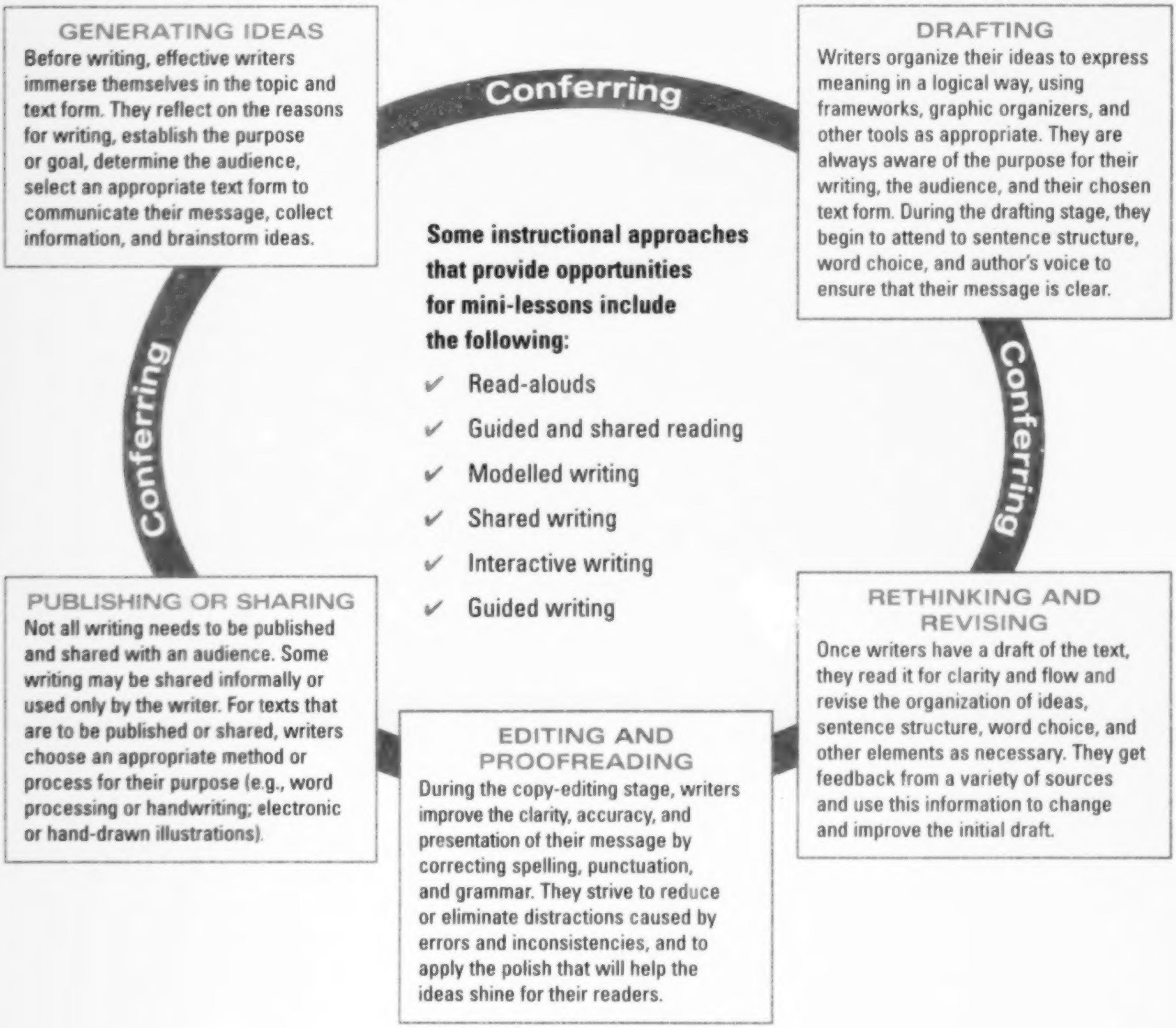
The recursive writing process involves several stages that can overlap and that students revisit as necessary: generating ideas, drafting text, rethinking and revising, editing and proofreading, and publishing or sharing the text with others. Writers work through these stages in a recursive fashion, filling in blanks and refining their thinking and their texts as they acquire greater clarity about what they know and need to do to accomplish the writing task.

Figure 16 shows a framework for teaching the recursive writing process in junior classrooms. It includes the following elements:

- clearly defined stages in the writing process

- carefully planned instructional approaches that immerse students in the writer's craft, that provide opportunities for mini-lessons on specific strategies and skills, and that involve students in applying what they learn
- plenty of opportunities for students to confer with the teacher and peers and to receive feedback on their writing

Figure 16. Teaching the Recursive Writing Process in the Junior Classroom



GENERATING IDEAS
Before writing, effective writers immerse themselves in the topic and text form. They reflect on the reasons for writing, establish the purpose or goal, determine the audience, select an appropriate text form to communicate their message, collect information, and brainstorm ideas.

DRAFTING
Writers organize their ideas to express meaning in a logical way, using frameworks, graphic organizers, and other tools as appropriate. They are always aware of the purpose for their writing, the audience, and their chosen text form. During the drafting stage, they begin to attend to sentence structure, word choice, and author's voice to ensure that their message is clear.

Some instructional approaches that provide opportunities for mini-lessons include the following:

- ✓ Read-alouds
- ✓ Guided and shared reading
- ✓ Modelled writing
- ✓ Shared writing
- ✓ Interactive writing
- ✓ Guided writing

PUBLISHING OR SHARING
Not all writing needs to be published and shared with an audience. Some writing may be shared informally or used only by the writer. For texts that are to be published or shared, writers choose an appropriate method or process for their purpose (e.g., word processing or handwriting; electronic or hand-drawn illustrations).

RETHINKING AND REVISING
Once writers have a draft of the text, they read it for clarity and flow and revise the organization of ideas, sentence structure, word choice, and other elements as necessary. They get feedback from a variety of sources and use this information to change and improve the initial draft.

EDITING AND PROOFREADING
During the copy-editing stage, writers improve the clarity, accuracy, and presentation of their message by correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar. They strive to reduce or eliminate distractions caused by errors and inconsistencies, and to apply the polish that will help the ideas shine for their readers.

Figure 17 shows how teachers support students at each stage of the writing process.

Figure 17. Supporting Students at Each Stage of the Writing Process

	What students do	What teachers do
Generating ideas	• Access their prior knowledge • Identify the purpose, audience, and form for their writing • Immerse themselves in the topic • Collect information	• Build context and learning experiences through read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading • Draw on students' prior knowledge • Provide students with plenty of opportunities to talk and confer about the topic and text form • Model the structure and features of the text form
Drafting	• Organize and plan ideas (e.g., using webs, idea logs, electronic and other graphic organizers, writer's notebooks) • Create a written draft, using word processing and other productivity tools where appropriate • Use graphic organizers to support their thinking • Organize writing to reflect the text form, text features, and audience	• Provide students with graphic/anchor charts, where appropriate, to help them organize their thinking • Use modelled and shared writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons • Coach individuals or small groups
Rethinking and revising	• Focus on clarity and content, adding and deleting ideas as necessary • Reread work to revise word choice and writing style • Consult reference materials (e.g., a thesaurus, another writer's work) • Confer with peers and/or the teacher • Use a revision checklist or guiding questions	• Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that demonstrate the revision process • Provide students with revision guidelines and anchor charts for reference • Coach individuals or small groups
Editing and proofreading	• Reread work to edit for grammar, spelling, and punctuation • Consult reference materials • Confer with peers and/or the teacher • Use an editing checklist or guiding questions	• Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that demonstrate the editing process • Provide students with editing guidelines and anchor charts for reference • Coach individuals or small groups
Publishing or sharing	• Rewrite revised and edited drafts to present to a pre-determined audience • Polish the presentation format (e.g., fonts, graphics, text layout) • Ensure that the presentation style matches the form, purpose, and audience	• Use modelled, shared, and guided writing instructional formats to teach mini-lessons that outline the publishing process for a specific audience • Provide students with publishing resources (e.g., slide-show software, website pages) • Provide students with opportunities for presenting, sharing, and/or displaying partial or completed texts

CONFERRING

Students need regular opportunities to talk about their writing and to receive feedback from the teacher and their peers. Some of these writing conferences will be detailed and formally organized, while others will be informal and spontaneous.

> "Students need instruction, guidance, support, encouragement, and acceptance if they are going to be willing and able participants in writing."
>
> *(Cunningham & Allington, 2003, p. 97)*

For example, after a mini-lesson the students could write independently while the teacher confers with individuals or small groups. Students could be working on a self-selected piece of writing or on a teacher-directed piece that provides practice in a particular text form or in a specific writing skill (such as paragraph writing). Students could also be working at different stages of the writing process (e.g., completing a final draft or developing a new piece of writing using a graphic organizer). Throughout this segment of the writing period, the teacher confers with students in order to:

- effectively assess student needs and track student learning;
- coach individual students in a small group or one-on-one;
- provide timely encouragement and praise.

The conference format provides the teacher with further opportunities to draw the student's attention to the ways in which reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking work together. It also provides a context for examining how the writer's craft helps the student writer in making meaning, and how the writing itself influences the conclusions that the reader will draw from the text. As students evaluate the texts they write, they become more discerning readers and more effective writers.

The teacher also allocates time for students to share and to discuss their written drafts with partners, in small groups, or with the whole class in an author's-chair format.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND MINI-LESSONS

Teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to write on a wide variety of topics in different text forms. The junior classroom becomes a writer's workshop where teachers and students do the following:

Also see section 6, "Approaches to Teaching and Learning".

- **Before writing**, teachers immerse the students in the topic and relevant text forms in print, graphical, and electronic formats. They guide students in purposeful talk that activates prior knowledge and engages higher-order thinking skills. They use an inquiry approach to encourage students to collect more information. They draw attention to the writing process, and engage students in thinking about how they will use the process.

- **Before and during writing**, teachers encourage purposeful talk that helps students think through their ideas and put their thoughts into words. They use mini-lessons to model or introduce a specific teaching point (e.g., how to organize ideas when writing a report, how to write a well-developed paragraph). To motivate and guide students to become successful and independent writers, teachers offer encouragement and ongoing feedback.
- **After writing**, students share their written work. They also reflect on and talk about their texts, the writing process, and the strategies and skills they used. They consider what worked, what they could do differently the next time, and what writing strategies and skills they need to develop.

> "In many ways, whenever we use books as models of effective writing in the classroom, the books and their authors become our 'co-teachers'. Our classroom libraries are filled with on demand 'team teachers'.... We use ideas and techniques of other 'teachers' to help our students become better writers every time we use published literature in our writing lessons."
>
> *(Peterson, 2003, p. 1)*

Writing instruction should include a balance of direct, explicit instruction and opportunities for students to make choices (for example, of the writing topic) (Peterson, 2003; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Atwell, 2003). Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches such as the following to model effective writing and to engage students in the writing process:

- **Read–alouds:** While reading aloud from fiction or from informational texts, the teacher models various characteristics of the writer's work (such as the use of voice). The teacher may deconstruct the text to point out specific characteristics of the text form or genre (e.g., how a procedure is organized).
- **Shared reading:** Using a big book, chart, overhead, or digitally displayed text, a teacher highlights and reinforces an author's use of a variety of text conventions and writing traits. The framework of a new text form – its structure and features or elements – can also be identified on a large copy of the text. Students and teacher, working together, can then use the framework to deconstruct the text.
- **Modelled writing:** During modelled writing, teachers record on a large, visible surface that can be easily observed by all students (such as a chalk board, white board, chart paper, or overhead). The teacher models the writing process, emphasizing a pre-determined teaching focus. While modelling the writing process, the teacher also often uses a think-aloud approach to model problem solving.
- **Shared writing:** The teacher works with the class to construct a piece of writing on a highly visible surface. As they work together, the teacher often uses a think-aloud approach to model problem solving.

- **Interactive writing:** The teacher guides students to actively compose together, considering appropriate words, phrases, organization of text, and layout. At points determined by the teacher for instructional value, individual students take over or "share the pen" with the teacher (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000).
- **Guided writing:** The teacher models how to use a graphic organizer or other planning tool to help students organize their thinking. The organizer could provide a framework for a particular form of writing (e.g., report writing) or it could simply help students collect and sort their ideas for writing.

Research indicates ...

It is important to model thinking strategies and composing techniques when teaching writing. Through modelled, shared, and guided activities, students receive the support they need to progress to writing texts independently (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hillcocks, 1995).

THE ROLE OF WORD KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge of how language and words work empowers students to become independent and proficient writers. Word knowledge encompasses spelling, grammar, language conventions, literary devices, and word choice. Instruction that promotes word knowledge helps students to become problem solvers and word detectives who monitor and adjust their use of words to enhance their writing. The instruction must be developmentally appropriate, interactive, and constructive, providing students with genuine opportunities to make meaning with words and to use them in real-world contexts.

Teachers help students to develop their word knowledge by modelling strategies for deconstructing and rebuilding words (e.g., using prefixes, suffixes, roots, derivatives, knowledge of compound structures, pattern detection, analogy) and by demonstrating how to choose words for specific purposes in writing (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, descriptive words). Word charts of interesting and nice-to-know words can help students develop their writing vocabulary. Words that convey critical concepts can be studied in more depth by examining the origins of the word (e.g., Latin roots), letter patterns (e.g., *tion* endings), and semantic connections (e.g., descriptive words, action words).

Spelling correctly is a problem-solving process for writers and a practical courtesy for readers. Junior students need to develop a "spelling conscience" that guides them to spell words correctly for the benefit of their readers. Most published spelling programs provide a sequential, developmentally appropriate, problem-solving approach to spelling and grammar, but they do not always offer help in meeting the on-the-spot instructional needs of students or involve authentic writing tasks.

Teachers need to be very selective in using the lists and activities in trade spellers, keeping in mind that spelling instruction must be embedded in reading and writing activities and must be focused on meaning. It is useful to apply the systematic study of spelling patterns and strategies to students' writing in every subject area.

> "With the time pressures common in today's classroom, it is tempting to assign exercises from a speller as homework and simply dictate words at the end of the week. However, unless the concepts are linked in weekly units to everyday writing and other word-study activities, the age-old problem of transferring word knowledge to writing is likely to continue. A Friday dictation should not be a measure of success of a student's spelling."
>
> *(Scott & Siamon, 2004, p. 25)*

ASSESSING STUDENT WRITING

Teachers assess both the student's attitude to writing and the writing itself in order to plan effective instruction. In the junior grades, students become actively involved in setting goals for their development as writers, in assessing their own written work, and in becoming reflective participants in their learning. Teachers plan for writing assessment that addresses the Ministry of Education's achievement categories, using a range of tools that enable students to demonstrate their progress in writing in a variety of ways.

Also see section 7, "Assessment".

Following are a few examples of the many sources of information that teachers use to assess writing attitudes and achievement:

- **Attitude and interest surveys:** Students describe their attitude towards writing and how they see themselves as writers, and identify topics and texts of interest. Teachers use this information to select appropriate and engaging writing topics and to plan instruction.
- **Teacher's observations:** The teacher observes the student writing and talking about topics and the writing process. The teacher may record anecdotal remarks or use checklists to guide and focus the observations towards specific behaviours and/or skills. This information informs the teacher about student needs and programming priorities.
- **Independent writing samples from various stages of the writing process:** The teacher reviews samples of the student's written work at various stages of development in order to assess the student's writing skills in a variety of text forms that include fiction and informational texts in a range of subjects and that require the application of higher-order thinking skills and the use of appropriate technologies.
- **Student reflections and self-evaluations:** Students articulate their own progress towards writing goals, and the teacher uses this information to determine the student's perceptions of his or her own writing, to help the student take ownership of the writing goals, to acquire insight into the student's metacognitive processes, and to

help the student develop the habit of reflective learning (e.g., asking "What have I done?", "What can I do to improve?", "How can I use what I have learned?").

- **Writing conferences:** The teacher and student talk together about the student's writing achievement level and set goals for improvement.

The Student's Literacy Portfolio

The student's own writing is a key source of information for ongoing assessment and feedback. Students need to learn how to manage their writing, organize their work, collect ideas, and reflect on their performance. The student files his or her finished writing and work in progress in some type of container, and goes through the collection on a regular basis, making decisions about the contents. The student may choose particular pieces to refine or develop, or remove pieces that are no longer of interest. Students are asked to date all their work and to keep together all the work related to a particular piece of writing. The process of selecting what to keep in the collection requires students to assess and reflect on their own work, which can be both engaging and motivating.

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

To encourage a focus on literacy and to promote high achievement in writing in the junior grades, principals and school leaders do the following:

- Demonstrate their own commitment to writing by sharing with students the multitude of reasons for which they write and the forms they most often choose (Harwayne, 2000).
- Cultivate a school culture that supports the teaching of writing, with conditions or norms that include the wise use of time, a caring and respectful learning environment, evidence of the love of story, access to literature, and clearly articulated purposes for student writing (Harwayne, 2000).
- Celebrate student writing in school-wide celebrations and events.
- Value junior writers' development as they use the writing process by not overvaluing the product.
- Reinforce to parents or guardians that writing is a developmental process. Refer to the stages of writing development used by the school board and show samples of student writing at all stages.
- Inform parents or guardians about the writing process so that they understand that some writing, such as personal thoughts or early drafts, does not need to be edited and that not all writing will be "published".
- Forge community connections that provide students with authentic reasons to write and real audiences with whom they can share their writing.

For many other ways in which the principal and school leaders support writing in the junior grades, see "What Principals and School Leaders Do" in sections 6, 7, 8, and 12.

11

BUILDING SCHOOL SUCCESS

Building school success entails building a community and culture of learning, focused on student achievement. Because literacy is a key to learning, it is an essential dimension of all planning for school success. Effective planning involves the whole school community in developing a literacy vision.

In a language-rich world, vibrant communities and cultures are built through conversation. Just as students use talk to clarify their thinking and to extend their learning in reading and writing, educators engage in conversations to build school success. Conversations about literacy achievement take place between and among all partners in schools, boards, communities, and the Ministry of Education. Through focused conversations, all partners learn more about the changing dynamics of literacy in the world today, the current state of learning in their specific environments, and how to help all students develop as literate learners – especially in the pivotal years from Grades 4 to 6.

KEY MESSAGES

- All schools can become successful learning communities that develop strong literacy skills in junior learners.
- Rich and focused conversations about literacy, involving all members of the school community, provide the foundation for building successful schools.
- All partners in education must have a shared vision for and a commitment to literacy that includes high expectations for student achievement.
- The culture of the school strongly influences the literacy learning of students.
- Strong school-family-community partnerships, with a focus on curriculum and instruction, can profoundly influence the literacy learning of students in the junior grades.
- Appropriate technology – including productivity tools, learning aids, multimedia equipment, and more – must be considered in all planning at the classroom, school, and board levels so that students and teachers are equipped for literacy in the twenty-first century.

SCHOOL SUCCESS PLANNING

School success planning – also called improvement planning – is the key to helping the whole school community focus its efforts on improving the learning of all students and closing the achievement gap for struggling students. An effective school plan includes goals, strategies, measures of success, targets, resources, timelines, and responsibilities. The success of the school plan depends on how well the principal and staff understand the school culture, engage in regular, focused dialogue, build commitment and connections to shared beliefs, distribute leadership, and follow through on strategies to accomplish the goals.

The planning process is described in several provincial resources, such as the *Early Reading Stategy, The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario* (2003); *Think Literacy Success, Grades 7-12: The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk Ontario* (2003); and the *EQAO Guide to School and Board Improvement Planning* (2002). For detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of directors, principals, teachers, and others involved in school planning, refer to those resources. (See “Sources and Resources” at the end of this report for more information about the publications mentioned here.)

This report focuses not on the whole school success planning process, but on the professional conversations about junior literacy that occur among education partners as part of school planning. These conversations help to make the school success planning process real and meaningful for everyone involved.

FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSING SCHOOL-WIDE LITERACY

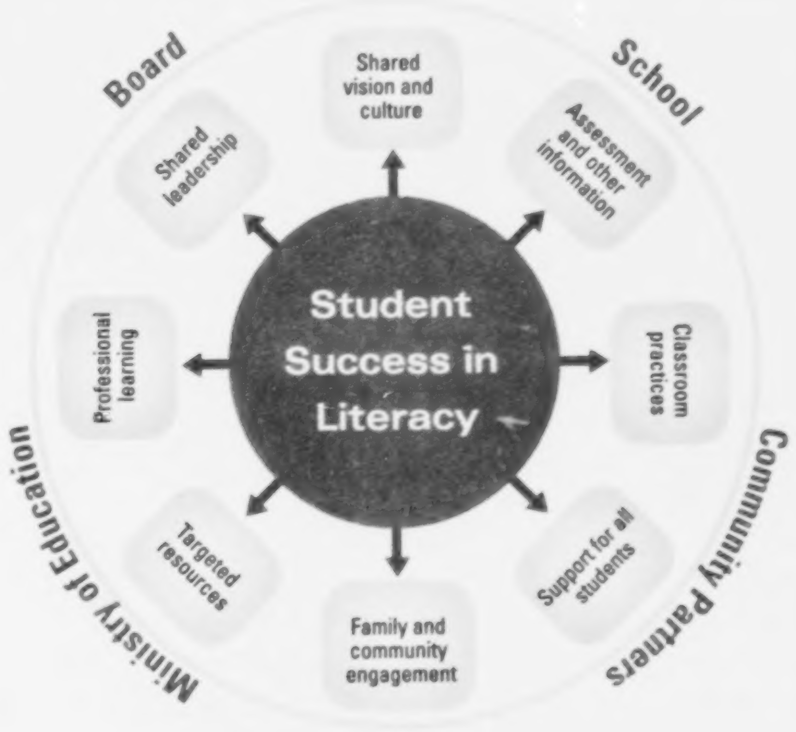
Figure 18 shows a framework for engaging in conversations aimed at making literacy a central focus of the school's learning culture and the key element of student success. The partners in these conversations are the board (the director, superintendents, and program support staff), the school (the principal, vice-principal, teachers, teacher librarians, and others), community partners (families and community groups and agencies), and the Ministry of Education. Drawing on current research related to effective schools, the framework identifies eight topics for professional and community-wide conversation aimed at enhancing literacy in the junior grades: shared vision and culture, professional learning, targeted resources, assessment and other information, classroom practices, support for all students, family and community engagement, and shared leadership. These topics are synthesized from several sources, including Hill and Crévola (1998); Lipson, Mosenthal, Mekkelsen, and Russ (2004); and Fullan (2001).

Figure 19 on pages 100–101 lists some key questions to guide professional and community-wide conversations on each topic.

The primary goals of these focused conversations (as adapted from Scott, 2002) are to:

- investigate literacy instruction and achievement in the school or board;
- bring about greater student achievement in literacy;
- mobilize resources and staff to address identified literacy challenges;
- create a collaborative atmosphere where professional practice improves.

Figure 18. Framework for Professional Conversations About Promoting School-Wide Literacy


Board
Shared vision and culture
School
Shared leadership
Assessment and other information
Student Success in Literacy
Professional learning
Classroom practices
Ministry of Education
Targeted resources
Family and community engagement
Support for all students
Community Partners

SHARED VISION AND CULTURE

In the context of building school success, *vision* refers to what educators believe and are striving to achieve; *culture* refers to how they feel and do things as a community. A shared vision for literacy and student achievement provides a foundation for building school success. Education partners work together to build a school-wide vision that aligns with the board's vision. This common bond guides decision making throughout the system. It is always at the forefront of dialogue in staff meetings, school team meetings, and school council meetings, and it permeates the life of the school community.

An effective vision for literacy sets high expectations for student learning, and describes the shared beliefs and understandings of the community – for example, that all students can succeed and that teachers make a key difference in student learning.

The **director** is a vision keeper for literacy and student success throughout the board, engaging the entire system in four culture-building tasks: (1) clearly identifying and embracing a mission, vision, and values for literacy achievement; (2) articulating clear and explicit expectations for student success; (3) aligning initiatives among board departments and schools; and (4) strategically allocating resources, including time, money, and staff. The director shows a commitment to junior literacy by enabling superintendents and principals to focus on student learning and teacher practice. The director gives superintendents the mandate and time to engage in meaningful, ongoing conversations with teachers and principals, and ensures that the board is prepared to respond to feedback and make changes that serve the broad-based literacy needs of staff and students.

Superintendents articulate literacy as a priority and work with other leaders to make literacy a major component of professional learning across all subject areas in the junior division. They engage in meaningful, ongoing conversations with principals and teachers about the literacy practices in their schools. During regular school visits, they spend time talking with all teachers in their classrooms about literacy, school culture, and student learning, with the aim of celebrating good practices, identifying system needs, and encouraging further thinking. The superintendent also supports and encourages the creation of community and school partnerships, and helps to establish links between the community and school.

Principals are instructional leaders and literacy champions for their school. They align the school's culture and vision with the board's vision for literacy achievement. They encourage strong connections between families and the whole school community. In order to do this effectively, principals need content expertise in the area of literacy, as well as in the process of managing change. They create an environment for school-based professional learning that focuses on the development of strong literacy programs, and include themselves as a team partner. They ensure that the school environment promotes high expectations for all students.

Teachers have an important and highly visible role to play in implementing the vision. As key players in a strong junior literacy program, they are knowledgeable about current literacy theory and practice, understand the characteristics of junior students, and have effective teaching and management skills. They understand and commit to the literacy mission, vision, and values; maintain clear, high expectations for their students; implement effective literacy instruction based on ongoing assessment; plan time for literacy learning in all subjects; and use current, inclusive print and non-print resources.

"Leadership is a shared endeavour, the foundation for the democratization of schools. School change is a collective endeavour; therefore, people do this most effectively in the presence of others. The learning journey must be shared: otherwise, shared purpose and action are never achieved."

(Lambert, 1998, p. 9)

"Teachers have to seize every opportunity to explore beyond their field of specialization and to discuss their problems, their methods, and the validity of their knowledge in relation to the literature, existing knowledge, and what research says about their field. Teachers have to allow themselves to be instructed by their colleagues or to instruct them when the research provides a pretext."

(Perrenoud, 1997a, p. 89)

ASSESSMENT AND OTHER INFORMATION

In successful schools, educators know the needs and strengths of their students in reading, writing, and oral language, and work collaboratively to support the literacy development of all students as they advance through the junior grades. Educators set standards and targets for student achievement, and use them to guide practice and to track the literacy progress of individual students, the Junior Division, and the whole school.

Teachers regularly assess their students, formally and informally, as the students read, write, talk, and think in the classroom. Teachers assess before, during, and after learning. As the teachers gather this assessment information, they build reliable records of progress for each student. Teachers use this information to continually enhance their teaching practices and to improve student learning.

To evaluate current practices and to plan next steps for school-wide and board-wide literacy programs, educators use classroom-based assessment results, supplemented by large-scale assessment results, surveys, and demographic information. Large-scale assessments of reading and writing, such as the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), provide additional information needed for school and board planning. However, the results of these assessments must be understood and used in context with classroom-based assessments and demographic information. Taken together, all of this information paints a comprehensive picture of the literacy achievement of students. It is important to recognize that the teacher's ongoing classroom assessment of a student contributes vital information to that student's assessment profile. EQAO data is helpful in decision making when used in conjunction with other data.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

In successful schools, classrooms are organized to meet the learning needs of students. Teachers practise effective classroom management so that they have the flexibility to engage individuals, small groups, and large groups of students in instruction that addresses specific learning needs. They choose their instructional and assessment approaches strategically from a range of options, guided by current research and by their ongoing assessment of student learning. Their choices include purposeful, cross-curricular connections and integrate the arts and technology. Teachers create a culture of learning in the classroom that values each member of the learning community.

SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Effective schools are committed to the education of all students, including second-language learners and students with special education needs, both those who are struggling with and those who excel in reading, writing, and oral language. These schools set realistic challenges for all students, offer additional opportunities for students who excel, and provide early intervention and extra help for students who are underachieving.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

> **"Where do children learn and grow? At home. At school. In the community. Students develop in all contexts simultaneously and continuously. Thus, the bridges of home, school and community are inevitably interconnected."**
>
> *(Epstein, 2001, p. 161)*
>
> **"Parent-teacher cooperation helps students learn in various settings (school and home)."**
>
> *(Goupil, 1997, p. 6)*

Successful schools communicate regularly with families and families communicate regularly with schools in ways that are meaningful and that help the families and school support the junior student. Schools welcome parents into the building, and parents actively engage with the school, community, community agencies, and others in partnerships that support student learning. Formal structures, such as school councils and family literacy events, provide opportunities for parents to learn and ask questions about the school's goals for literacy and student achievement, to review school-wide results, and to provide input that will inform school literacy planning. In addition to these formal structures, schools encourage ongoing informal contact that contributes to the building of a shared vision and to the development of a literacy-centred culture of learning focused on student achievement.

School staff continuously seek opportunities to enhance their awareness of the local community and its cultures. They strive to learn more about the knowledge, skills, stories, and traditions of their students' families and communities, and find practical ways to use this information to engage students in literacy development.

The principal creates opportunities for parents and the community to understand literacy initiatives by:

- discussing literacy learning and the school's change process at school council meetings;
- organizing family literacy events where parents, students, and teachers can participate as a school community in activities that help parents understand the types of teaching and learning that occurs in their child's classroom;
- organizing volunteer training so that parents can help productively in junior classrooms.

Classroom volunteers – including family members, community members, and students – can greatly enrich and support the literacy program in the junior grades. Volunteers in the classroom serve as role models of literate adults. An effective school-based volunteer program must be well organized and supported by the board.

Families can also help by strengthening their own connection with the community to ensure that their children have access to information technology outside of the school. For example, families need to be aware that computer hardware and software are available for student use in public libraries, and to know that times are set aside during the school day for students to use the computers at school.

TARGETED RESOURCES

Schools require a clear vision of what students need and what literacy success looks like in order to allocate their resources, including funds, learning materials, technology, and time. Schools build flexibility into their resource plans so that they are able to respond to changing needs and new information. They promote collaborative decision making that draws on the expertise of staff, including the teacher-librarian and other support staff.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning plays an important role in student success. It has the greatest effect on the success of junior students when it is clearly focused, practical, guided by current research, and shared among educators in a supportive, risk-free learning community. A community of learners that includes teachers, the principal, the vice-principal, and in-school support staff allows all staff members to reinforce their own learning, to support the learning of their colleagues, and to develop consistency and continuity in the school's literacy program.

Also see section 12, "Professional Learning".

Principals encourage teachers to learn together, reflect on their practice together, and collaborate in planning the junior literacy program. The principal may participate in the literacy learning community by:

- attending system-wide and school-based professional learning sessions with the junior teachers;
- establishing and participating in a book club that focuses on professional reading in the area of literacy in order to promote meaningful conversations about literacy programming and children's literacy development;
- providing articles and online resources on literacy and professional learning;
- sharing leadership expertise with in-school literacy leaders by mentoring them.

> "Nobody says that sharing leadership is easy, but principals who avoid cultivating leadership in others maintain a kind of stunted culture."
>
> *(Lambert, 1988, p. 504)*
>
> "Many principals participate in staff development sessions along with the teachers; in the process, they learn a great deal about the complexities of teaching and learning – helpful information, particularly when administrative certification does not include course work on teaching and learning literacy."
>
> *(Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, p. 191)*

Program support staff at the board, including consultants and coordinators, make a significant contribution to the professional learning of school staff. These specialists bring both a system-wide and a school-based perspective to junior literacy. They facilitate professional learning throughout the board by sharing good practices and by encouraging communication among schools.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Schools need leaders who nurture a culture of cooperation and mutual support. Ontario schools have made a definite shift to shared leadership (also called distributed leadership). In a shared leadership model, classroom and specialist teachers have opportunities to take on leadership roles that support curriculum and instruction throughout the school. Shared leadership helps to build commitment and capacity to implement the school literacy plan in all grades, and especially in the junior grades where literacy learning is of pivotal importance.

Principals have a key role in building the school's vision and culture for literacy in the junior grades. Principals analyse data to inform their decisions about the supports required. They carefully consider the supports teachers need to develop an effective program for junior literacy, and use those supports to build commitment to the program. Supports can include physical and human resources to build up the program and timetabling that provides blocks of time for literacy planning, extended literacy learning for students, and professional literacy learning for staff.

Literacy leaders include teachers who are formally identified as lead teachers and teachers who develop and share their expertise informally to support literacy in the school community. Literacy leaders can be highly influential in contributing their expertise to promote positive changes that advance the cause of literacy in the junior grades. Literacy leaders need ongoing guidance and support from the principal and staff members to work strategically to promote literacy achievement for all students.

> "When a principal – rather than the school community members – consistently solves problems, makes decisions, and gives answers, dependency behaviours on the part of staff actually increase."
>
> *(Lambert, 2003, p. 48)*

Figure 19. Focus Questions for Conversations About Promoting School-Wide Literacy

Shared Vision and Culture

☐ How are we promoting a culture of literacy and advancing the literacy achievement of junior students?

☐ How do we involve the school community in planning and implementing a strategic literacy program in the junior grades?

☐ What are the most pressing issues that the school community needs to consider?

☐ What are the most effective ways to help principals learn what they need to know to support literacy achievement for all students?

☐ What organizational and collaborative structures support effective instructional leadership?

☐ What are the most effective ways to build leadership capacity within a school?

☐ What strategies are most successful for collecting longitudinal data in order to see patterns over time?

Assessment

☐ How does the system ensure that the teacher's ongoing assessment of the student is given primary consideration when a wide range of assessment information is being reviewed for the purpose of improving student learning?

☐ What other sources of information help us to identify the learning needs of junior students?

☐ Which combination of assessment strategies provide the most valuable information about the literacy learning of our students?

☐ Does our assessment information indicate that we should change our literacy practices, or does it confirm them?

☐ How do the results of EQAO-administered assessments inform our understanding of classroom-based assessment information?

☐ How do we set targets that promote improved achievement for all students?

☐ How do we analyse and use assessment information in planning and decision making?

Student Success

Shared Leadership

☐ Who are the literacy leaders in our school/system?

☐ How are we developing new literacy leaders at the board and in schools?

☐ What are we doing to build leadership teams?

☐ How can the school team best support each teacher in meeting the literacy needs of all junior students?

☐ How do we involve the home-school-community partnership in literacy planning and shared decision making in the school?

Professional Learning

☐ As a professional learning community, how have we increased our expertise in reading, writing, and oral language instruction and assessment?

☐ How are we creating a collaborative learning community across the grades?

☐ How do we work together to create a climate of trust and shared decision making?

☐ In what ways has our professional learning influenced our literacy teaching practices? What impact is this having on student learning?

Classroom Practices

- ☐ How are we helping students to read and write strategically in all subject areas?
- ☐ How do we engage students in purposeful talk to support their reading, writing, and thinking?
- ☐ What do we know about the prior knowledge, experiences, cultures, and interests of our junior students? How are we using this information in the classroom to help them develop as literate learners?
- ☐ What obstacles prevent the implementation of effective literacy programs in our classrooms? What strategies can we use to overcome these obstacles?

Support for All Students

- ☐ What range of literacy knowledge and skills do we see among our junior students? How do we address these differences?
- ☐ What literacy needs of second-language learners are we not meeting in the classroom or in the school?
- ☐ What interventions do we offer in the classroom and beyond the classroom for students who are excelling at or not meeting the literacy expectations for their grade?

in Literacy

Targeted Resources

- ☐ What scheduling considerations most benefit literacy learning in the junior grades?
- ☐ How can we use technology to promote the development of students' higher-order thinking skills as they engage in reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking?
- ☐ How are we effectively using our existing, relevant text-based and multimedia resources in the literacy program?
- ☐ How do our existing text-based and multimedia resources reflect the cultural profile of our school community and the global nature of Canadian society?
- ☐ How do our existing text-based and multimedia resources reflect the needs of all learners?
- ☐ In what ways is the collaborative relationship between the support staff and the classroom teacher making a difference in the junior learner's development of literacy skills?

Family and Community Engagement

- ☐ What is our shared understanding of literacy in the twenty-first century?
- ☐ How can we work together, formally and informally, to support the development of an effective literacy program at the school?
- ☐ What can families and community partners do outside the school to support the literacy development of junior learners?
- ☐ What kinds of information and resources should we be sharing to support the development of the junior learner's literacy skills, and how do we share them?
- ☐ What do we need to learn together to support and enrich the development of the junior learner's literacy skills in the home, school, and community?

12

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Through professional learning, educators continually develop their knowledge and skills to support student achievement in literacy, and build the collaborative relationships that are a hallmark of successful schools. Professional learning related to junior literacy is not a one-time event or the exclusive responsibility of a few teachers: it is ingrained in the culture of the school, board, and the Ministry of Education, and is embedded in planning at all levels.

KEY MESSAGES

- The benefits of professional learning multiply when educators work together to share their learning and expertise in a professional learning community.
- The school library should include a teacher resource area with current literacy resources in a variety of media.
- Professional resources should address the wide-ranging needs of students and equip educators to understand their students' abilities, interests, learning styles, experiences, and cultures.

BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

It is important for educators to learn together and to share their expertise in professional learning communities that extend across grades, across divisions, across subject areas, and among schools. By sharing their professional learning in a wider community, educators build the system-wide capacity to ensure that all students become successful literacy learners. They enhance their awareness of where their students are coming from, where they are going, and how they can best support each student's progress along the developmental continuum. Educators who work collaboratively are better equipped to meet the needs of second-language learners and students with special needs.

Figure 20 shows some of the connections to consider in forming an effective professional learning community.

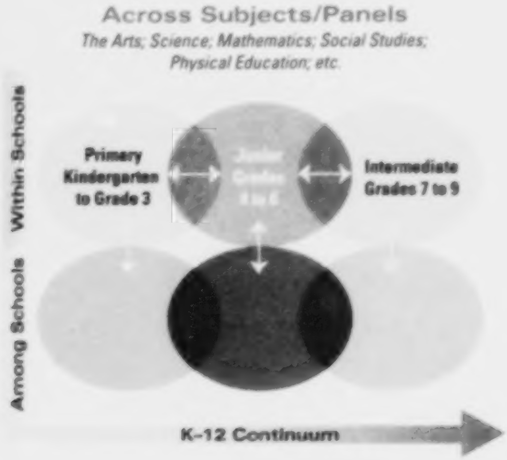

Across Subjects/Panels
The Arts; Science; Mathematics; Social Studies; Physical Education; etc.
Within Schools
Among Schools
Primary Kindergarten to Grade 3
Junior Grades 4 to 6
Intermediate Grades 7 to 9
K–12 Continuum

Figure 20. Building a Professional Learning Community to Support Junior Literacy

A focus on professional learning and collaboration provides teachers with opportunities to share classroom strategies, identify challenges, search for solutions, celebrate successes, and identify next steps. Time for collaboration and reflection becomes an integral part of the working relationship among educators.

The professional learning community should pay particular attention to supporting teachers in new assignments, including beginning teachers and those whose experience is in other grades or learning situations. This support can take many forms, including team teaching and opportunities for the "new" teachers to observe and discuss classroom strategies with experienced mentors.

Research indicates ...

- **Successful schools create a collaborative culture that involves parents, teachers, principals, and the wider community working and learning together to meet the needs of all students (Fullan, 2001).**
- **Teaching practices improve when teachers share their expertise and regard teaching as a collaborative rather than individual effort (Fullan, 2001).**

USING RESEARCH

Effective professional learning in the junior grades is grounded in both current and established research findings on both literacy and learning. By paying attention to research, educators acquire insight from new information, tap into a growing body of knowledge shared by literacy educators worldwide, and develop the habit of basing their own literacy practices on sound evidence.

No single research study, book, or training event will equip educators as literacy leaders and practitioners. Professional learning is a career-long process, based on a model of lifelong learning. The body of research on literacy and learning is large, and not all research is equally useful. Educators need criteria to help them identify key research and use it appropriately.

At present, there is a shortage of literacy research that focuses specifically on Grades 4 to 6. Schools and school boards can help to fill this gap by encouraging teachers to engage in action research, and by developing systems to share the results.

> **"In action research, teachers systematically gather and analyze data. They pose a question, identify the information they need to address the question, and collect and analyze it. ... Action research is conducted for the purpose of improving instruction in a specific environment."**
>
> ***(Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, p. 174)***

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Through the Internet and other current technologies, educators are able to expand their range of knowledge, their repertoire of skills, and their ability to communicate with colleagues, students' families, and others in the community. However, access to information technology alone will not improve teaching and learning. Teachers and school administrators need training in the proper use of the technology, and professional learning to help them effectively integrate the technology into the school's cross-curricular literacy program, information management systems, and school success planning processes.

APPROACHES TO AND TOPICS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning can include action research projects, demonstrations, mentoring and modelling, video analysis of literacy practices in the classroom, lesson study groups, book study groups, individual reading, Internet learning and networking, and more. The learning can happen through participation in committees, workshops, conferences, and additional qualification courses, as well as in staff meetings, team meetings, school council meetings, and self-directed study. All these forms of professional learning help to foster a deep commitment to lifelong learning.

Professional learning is most effective when it relates purposefully to school and board goals and to the Ontario Curriculum. Possible topics for ongoing professional learning include the following:

- understanding the characteristics and needs of the junior learner
- drawing on the student's first language, culture, and personal identity to inform instructional approaches
- addressing differences in boys' and girls' attitudes to and achievement levels in literacy
- using information technology and assistive technology to support literacy learning

- using student assessment information to inform instruction and school planning
- integrating critical-literacy practices into the junior classroom
- using literacy research to inform classroom practice
- involving parents in their child's literacy learning
- working with family and community volunteers

> "School and family partnerships must incorporate multicultural education in order to assure student success in school and to involve all families successfully. The new perspectives and directions linking school and family partnerships and multicultural education must be added to preservice and inservice teacher and administrator education."
>
> *(Hidalgo, Bright, Siu, Swap, & Epstein, 1995, p. 517)*

SELECTING PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

All teachers need access to a well-developed teacher resource area to support professional learning in literacy. This area, which may be in the school library, will include current books, journals, videos, and technology resources such as electronic learning modules. Through professional resources, educators gain access to new learning and to the larger community of professional learners.

Teachers, principals, and other school leaders can use the following questions to guide them in selecting professional resources that support a school-wide approach to literacy, with an emphasis on the junior grades:

- To address the needs of the junior learner, does the resource:
  - consider the full range of learners in the junior grades?
  - affirm that all learners are capable of successful learning and higher-order thinking?
  - represent the cultures, races, faiths, family structures, and socio-economic levels of students in the school community?
  - address the literacy attitudes and skills of both boys and girls?
- To promote literacy learning, does the resource:
  - focus on the links among reading, writing, talking, and thinking?
  - address reading and writing as processes?
  - consider texts of all types, including non-traditional and non-academic texts and graphical texts in a range of media?
  - support the integration of literacy instruction into other subjects and the integration of ideas and information from other subjects into literacy instruction?

- draw on current research supported by classroom practice?
- describe the best practices of successful schools?
- provide descriptions, examples, and suggestions for teaching approaches and learning activities that promote high-level literacy learning?
- link assessment directly to teaching?
- help teachers to reflect on their current teaching and assessment practices and to expand their repertoire of strategies and practices?
- describe a wide range of literacy resources, including media and technology to support student learning in the junior grades?

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS DO

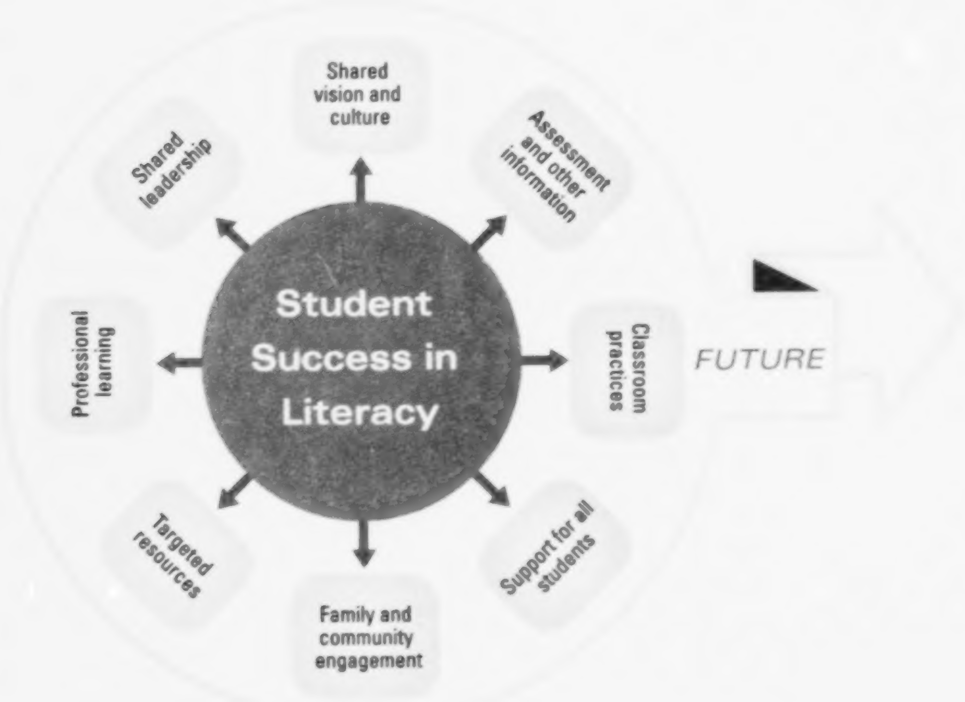
Principals and school leaders have a key role in promoting a culture of professional learning that supports literacy achievement in the junior grades. For example, they:

- involve the whole school team in systematically addressing the literacy needs of junior students and the professional development of junior teachers;
- collaborate with the whole school team to provide job-embedded professional learning on a wide range of topics related to reading and writing in the junior grades;
- interact with teachers to extend their knowledge of effective instructional approaches and strategies for reading and writing and the challenges faced by teachers in the junior grades;
- actively participate in professional learning activities with teachers;
- provide opportunities for teachers to discuss their students' reading and writing, and offer to work jointly with teachers to determine how to address learning difficulties;
- include non-homeroom teachers (e.g., special education teachers, librarians, physical education teachers) in professional learning activities related to junior literacy;
- experiment with alternative approaches to professional learning (e.g., teacher networks, book clubs, action research, lesson study groups, online learning) (Allington and Cunningham, 2002; Peterson, 2002);
- work with the whole school team to evaluate the reading and writing resources available in the Junior Division, and create a budget and plan to address gaps in classroom and school libraries;
- plan for and acquire professional resources that align with the priorities and areas of focus identified by the whole school team;
- manage the change process as teachers refine and develop their literacy practices to integrate lasting and meaningful changes into junior classroom programs.

13 THE PATH FORWARD

Success in literacy at all grade levels, including the junior years, requires the partnership of schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education. Beyond that, parents, the wider community, and the faculties of education have a key role. Having considered the guiding principles of this report (see section 3, "Guiding Principles for Junior Literacy", and the sidebar on p. 110), the current research, and the importance of working together for student success, the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, envisions a future in which all the relevant partners collaborate in the following areas:

- shared vision and culture
- assessment and other information
- classroom practices
- support for all students
- family and community engagement
- targeted resources
- professional learning
- shared leadership


Student Success in Literacy
Shared vision and culture
Assessment and other information
Classroom practices
Support for all students
Family and community engagement
Targeted resources
Professional learning
Shared leadership
FUTURE

Guiding Principles for Junior Literacy

- Literacy learning in the junior grades can transform children's lives.
- The goal of all literacy instruction is to enable students to make meaning from and in the wide range of texts they will encounter and produce at school and in the world.
- All junior students can develop as literate learners when they receive scaffolded support that prepares them for higher learning and increasing independence.
- Students are motivated to learn when they encounter interesting and meaningful texts on topics that matter to them.
- Teachers continually assess the literacy learning of their students in order to design classroom activities that will promote new learning for each student.
- Teachers continually develop their professional knowledge and skills, drawing on lessons from research to improve their classroom practice.
- Successful literacy learning in the junior grades is a team effort, requiring the support of the whole learning community – including teachers at all grade levels, school administrators, support staff, the board, parents, and community members.

SHARED VISION AND CULTURE

- Develop and implement a board-wide and school-based plan to focus on student literacy learning in the Junior Division, addressing a wide range of factors, including achievement targets, leadership, resource allocation, literacy across the curriculum, and professional learning.

ASSESSMENT AND OTHER INFORMATION

- Develop a consistent plan at the board level for gathering and analysing assessment data and other information, planning next steps, and communicating student assessment information to all stakeholders.
- Provide ongoing training for administrators and teachers in using different types of information to guide instruction and to plan strategies for school success.
- Work with the Ministry of Education to plan professional learning (including online courses) in the assessment of literacy levels and skills.
- Work with the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a province-wide data management system that school boards can use to analyse their literacy data and to share their findings.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

- Integrate literacy instruction into all subjects across the curriculum, using a variety of strategies.
- Limit "rotary" as much as possible in the Junior Division.
- Provide teachers with ample blocks of time to engage their students in cross-curricular literacy learning.
- Plan units of study that integrate literacy learning with learning in other content areas in meaningful ways, and that allow teachers to provide differentiated instruction and supports for students.
- Provide and use technologies that support literacy learning, and design instructional approaches that integrate technology into literacy learning.

SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Set high expectations for the literacy learning of all students, and provide resources and training to ensure that teachers can support all students in reaching these expectations.
- Provide opportunities for educators to work collaboratively to support literacy learning, in teams that include classroom teachers, special education teachers, second-language support teachers, information technology teachers, teacher-librarians, and administrators.
- Work with the Ministry of Education to establish an interactive website for sharing innovative teaching practices in the Junior Division and research about the junior student.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Together with the Ministry of Education and school boards, develop an effective plan for regular two-way communication between home and school in order to inform parents and involve them in the literacy learning of their children.
- Develop a province-wide parent guide (or guides) for supporting the literacy learning of children in the junior grades, being mindful of the varied languages and cultures of families in Ontario.
- Develop a board-wide and school-based plan to enhance the involvement of volunteers in supporting literacy instruction and in promoting a focus on literacy in the school.
- Know the families and groups in the wider community, and include them in literacy events that occur in the school.

TARGETED RESOURCES

- Develop and implement a purchasing plan that supports the board-wide and school-based literacy plan (described under "Shared Vision and Culture", above).
- Establish a board-wide vision for using technology to support literacy learning and school success, and develop and implement a plan that covers acquisition, implementation, training, support, and renewal.
- Work with the Ministry of Education to change the province-wide funding formula to ensure that boards can provide schools with current technological hardware, software, learning and technical support.
- Continue, through the Ministry of Education, to license appropriate literacy software that supports the literacy learning of junior students.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- Plan and implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers in the Junior Division, linking it directly to school success goals. Possible topics include higher-order thinking; critical literacy; differentiated instruction; identity engagement; cross-curricular literacy learning; integration of reading, writing, and oral language; integration of technologies; and assessment for learning.
- Provide sustained, collaborative opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate together in professional learning.
- Support and model a variety of professional learning approaches, such as book studies, networking, classroom visits, and lesson studies.
- Provide professional learning for principals and vice-principals to support their role as instructional leaders.
- Provide time for literacy leaders to work with teachers in the Junior Division.
- Provide professional development days during the academic year to enable educators to come together in larger groups to explore school-wide, board-wide, and province-wide literacy initiatives.
- Use online courses developed by the Ministry of Education for professional learning in literacy.
- Encourage action research in classrooms across Ontario in order to develop local expertise that can then be shared with others on key topics, such as the needs of junior learners, literacy instructional practices that engage both boys and girls, and choosing texts and practices that promote the development of critical-literacy skills.
- Encourage faculties of education and school boards to work together on rigorous research projects that combine the expertise of researchers and the wisdom and experience of classroom teachers and administrators.
- Work with the Ministry of Education (in consultation with faculties of education and school boards) to develop criteria for helping educators identify and use lessons from professional research to support school planning and classroom practices.
- Ensure that all pre-service student teachers learn the most current, research-based teaching and learning strategies to support literacy, including the integration of technologies into literacy teaching and learning.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

- Develop the literacy expertise of interested teachers in the Junior Division, and equip them to become mentors and coaches for others within their school community.
- Provide time, training, and opportunities for literacy leaders, principals, and school teams to work together to improve instructional practices in literacy in the Junior Division.
- Work with system curriculum leaders to align ministry, system, and cross-panel professional literacy capacity-building sessions.
- Work with faculties of education to promote the use of ministry-developed documents in pre-service and additional-qualification courses.
- Work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that pre-service faculty advisors are invited to training sessions related to new ministry documents, so that they can use these documents with pre-service teacher candidates.
- Work with community partners to explore how literacy as it is taught in schools relates to the literacy traditions, values, and practices in homes and communities, and apply the findings to program planning at the board, school, and classroom levels.

This path forward aims to ensure that all students develop the literacy knowledge and skills they need for learning in the junior grades and beyond. Success at all levels – with each student in every classroom, school, community, and board throughout Ontario – will take time, expertise, and committed teamwork.

GLOSSARY

academic language proficiency. Ability to use the increasingly complex oral and written language related to specific subjects in the curriculum.

action research. The specific gathering and analysis of data by educators (e.g., on student response to a new teaching strategy) in a specific learning environment (e.g., in the classroom, in the library, on a field trip) for the purpose of improving instruction in that environment.

anchor charts. Charts designed by the class or by the teacher that list procedures, processes, etc. for a particular activity (e.g., the stages of the writing process, procedures for a literature circle) or reference items (e.g., examples of capitalization, parts of speech, reading/thinking strategies).

anchor papers. Strong examples of actual student responses to a question or prompt that represent the performance described by a scoring guide.

authentic learning. Learning that is derived from the kinds of experiences students have in real life and that is relevant to their lives and the "real world".

author's chair. An instructional strategy in which students share their writing with their peers and receive feedback on it. A student, assuming the role of author, sits on a designated chair, shares a piece of his or her writing (often a draft) with an audience, and elicits comments from the audience about the content of the piece and the message that he or she, as author, is attempting to convey.

blog (slang for Web log). An online forum where people write personal journal entries and share them with others on a regular basis.

Bloom's taxonomy. A way of classifying educational objectives developed by a group of researchers headed by Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago. It describes thinking skills as a hierarchy, with knowledge and memory as the foundational skills, followed progressively by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

comprehension. The ability to understand and draw meaning from spoken words and from spoken, written, and visual texts in all media.

comprehension strategies. A variety of cognitive and systematic techniques that help readers to make meaning from texts (e.g., finding important ideas, questioning, summarizing information).

conversational fluency. The ability, especially for second-language learners, to carry on a conversation in familiar situations. Also, the ability to read aloud simple texts involving high-frequency words and simple grammatical constructions.

critical literacy. A process of looking beyond the literal meaning of texts to observe what is present and what is missing, in order to analyse and evaluate the meaning and the author's intent. Critical literacy goes beyond conventional critical thinking because it focuses on issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice. Students take a critical attitude by asking what view of the world the text advances and whether they find this view acceptable.

culture/cultural identity. Ways in which people live, think, and define themselves as a community.

differentiated instruction. An approach to instruction that maximizes each student's growth by considering the needs of each student at his or her current stage of development and then offering that student a learning experience that responds to his or her individual needs.

digital divide. The gap between those who do and those who do not have access to modern digital and information technology, and the knowledge and skills to use it.

expressive language. The language one is able to use to express oneself orally and in writing. Also see *receptive language*.

fluency. The ability to read with sufficient ease and accuracy to focus attention on the meaning and message of a text. Fluency not only involves the automatic identification of words, but also qualities such as rhythm, intonation, and phrasing at the phrase, sentence, and text levels, as well as anticipation of what comes next in a text.

grammar. The structure of a language, both spoken and written, including the functions and relationships of words in sentences.

graphic novel. A story in comics form, published as a book.

graphic organizer. A visual framework that helps students organize their ideas (e.g., a Venn diagram, a word web).

graphophonics. The study of the relationships between the symbols and sounds of a language and the visual information on the page. Graphophonic cues help readers to decode text. They include letter or sound relationships, word patterns, and words recognized by sight.

higher-order thinking. The transformation of information and ideas that occurs when students combine facts and ideas and use them to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation. By manipulating information and ideas through these processes, students are able to solve problems, acquire understanding, and discover new meaning.

identity engagement. The process of choosing, as a starting point for further learning, learning activities that affirm the personal and cultural identity of students. Identity engagement is grounded in the principle that students need opportunities to make connections between who they are, what they value, and what they are learning in school in order to make sense of new learning and integrate it into their lives.

Individual Education Plan (IEP). A plan that identifies the specific learning expectations for an individual student and that outlines how the school will address these expectations through appropriate special education programs and services. IEPs also identify the methods by which the student's progress will be reviewed.

Intermediate Division. Grades 7 to 9. The other divisions in the Ontario school system are the Primary Division (Kindergarten to Grade 3), the Junior Division (Grades 4–6), and the Senior Division (Grades 10–12).

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). A committee consisting of at least three people, one of whom must be a principal or a supervisory officer of the board, that decides whether or not a student should be identified as an "exceptional pupil" under the definition of exceptional pupil in the Education Act. For those who are identified as exceptional, the committee identifies the areas of exceptionality, determines an appropriate placement, and periodically reviews the identification and placement.

in-school review committee. A committee in place in some schools, consisting of selected school staff and other support specialists, that reviews the needs of struggling students.

Junior Division. Grades 4 to 6. The other divisions in the Ontario school system are the Primary Division (Kindergarten to Grade 3), the Intermediate Division (Grades 7–9), and the Senior Divison (Grades 10–12).

literacy. The ability to understand and to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas.

literacy assessment profile. A purposeful collection of key evidence about a student's achievement and progress in reading, writing, and oral/visual communication. The items in a student's literacy assessment profile provide a rich variety of information about the student's reading and writing strategies, understanding of the information and ideas presented in texts, ability to communicate in a variety of forms, and progress in achieving the expectations of the program. Literacy assessment profiles are maintained by the teacher.

literacy portfolio. A purposeful collection of student work that "tells the story" of the student's efforts, progress, and achievement in a given area or areas. Literacy portfolios are usually maintained by the student.

metacognition. The process of thinking about one's own thought processes. Metacognitive skills include the ability to monitor one's own learning.

multimodal texts. Texts of many types, produced in print, electronic, and graphical and other visual forms.

negotiating meaning. A form of communication that occurs when a speaker tries purposefully to communicate thoughts and a listener tries purposefully to understand those thoughts. Both parties restate, question, explain, and clarify until they come to a common understanding.

performance task. An authentic, meaningful task that requires a student to create a response, product, and/or performance in order to demonstrate knowledge and skills so that a teacher can assess the student's learning. An effective performance task requires higher-order thinking, involves inquiry as a way of constructing knowledge, relates to the broad categories of achievement and expectations outlined in the provincial curriculum, makes connections across subject areas, and relates classroom learning to the world beyond the classroom.

pragmatics. The study of how people choose what they say or write from the range of possibilities available in the language, and how listeners or readers are affected by those choices. Pragmatics involves understanding how the context influences the way sentences convey information.

Primary Division. Kindergarten to Grade 3. The other divisions in the Ontario school system are the Junior Division (Grades 4–6), the Intermediate Division (Grades 7–9), and the Senior Division (Grades 10–12).

receptive language. Language, including vocabulary and structure, that one is able to understand through reading and listening, although not necessarily able to express in speech or writing. Also see *expressive language*.

recursive writing process. The process involved in producing a written text, consisting of the following stages: generating ideas, drafting text, rethinking and revising text, editing and proofreading, and publishing or sharing the text with others. The process is recursive in that the stages can overlap and students can revisit them as necessary to produce a polished product.

reflective practice. For teachers, the positive habit of thinking about and critically analysing their own professional practices and understandings in order to improve them.

scaffolding. An instructional approach that helps students build on their prior knowledge and experiences in order to reach higher levels of learning and proficiency. Scaffolding refers to the temporary support that teachers provide until a student's skills and knowledge are strong enough to be self-supporting. The term was coined by researchers Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976).

semantics. The meaning in language, including the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, alone and in context.

Senior Division. Grades 10–12. The other divisions in the Ontario school system are the Primary Division (Kindergarten to Grade 3), the Junior Division (Grades 4–6), and the Intermediate Division (Grades 7–9).

story grammar. The structure and elements of narrative text. In Western cultures, story grammars have the following elements: setting (time, place); characters; the introduction of a problem or conflict; events (e.g., the reaction of the central character and his or her attempts to solve the problem); a resolution or conclusion; and a theme. A story map traces the story grammar.

syntax. The predictable structure of a language and the ways words are combined to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax includes classes of words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) and their functions (e.g., subject, object).

taxonomy. A way of ordering or classifying ideas and information, such as *Bloom's taxonomy* of thinking skills.

teacher moderation. A process for ensuring that student assessment results are comparable across classes and schools. Through moderation, teachers work together to share beliefs and practices, enhance their understanding, compare their interpretations of student results, and confirm their judgements about a student's level of achievement.

text. A representation of ideas that can be shared over distance and time. For the purposes of this report, the term *text* is used to describe information and ideas that are captured in print and electronic forms, using words, graphics, and other visual elements.

text form. A category or type of text that has certain defining characteristics. The concept of text forms provides a way for readers and writers to think about the purpose of a text and its intended audience.

text messaging device. An electronic device for sending or receiving short written messages (e.g., a pager or cell phone).

transactional strategies instruction. A research-based instructional approach that focuses on helping students to become more strategic readers. The teacher explains and demonstrates the use of reading strategies, and then students apply the strategies with guidance and support from the teacher.

UNESCO. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

visualizing/visualization. The process of creating mental pictures of information as one reads or listens, in order to aid comprehension.

vocabulary. All the words of a language that are used or understood by a particular person or group.

word study. A carefully designed instructional process that involves students in actively exploring the patterns and regularities that exist in the spelling of the words of a language. Word study is a learner-centered, conceptual approach to spelling instruction and vocabulary development.

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